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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND THE WORSHIPING CHURCH
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A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Religion

by
Richard Howard Craft
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This dissertation, written by

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*under the direction of his Faculty Committee,
and approved by its members, has been presented
to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of
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PREFACE

One of the most significant developments in the current movement for "church renewal" has been a re-discovery of the importance of worship. Innumerable books and articles on the subject have appeared in recent years, representing the efforts of biblical scholars, theologians, church historians, pastors, and church educators to share with the church their insights about worship. Major denominations have undertaken official explorations into the history and meaning of worship, and many of these bodies have published new liturgies and liturgical guidelines as a result of their studies. Many churchmen have found a source of genuine personal renewal in these developments, and many congregations have sensed the working of the Holy Spirit as they have sought in worship a meaningful embodiment of a Christian style of life.

Yet for the great majority of local congregations, the emphasis on renewal in worship which has been "pushed" by their denominations has had little effect. Worship remains a strange mixture of sentiment and time-hardened custom, only vaguely related to the other activities of the church or to the activities of the individual Christian in his life outside the sanctuary.

It is my contention that what is needed is a pervasive understanding, on the local level, of the nature and meaning of worship as the center of the church's life--" . . . the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed . . . the fount from which all her

power flows."¹ What I am calling for is a reorientation of the church's educational ministry toward worship as its goal, as its paradigm, and as the source of its basic understandings.

The thesis is this: Christian worship is a dialogue between God and the gathered Christian community in which that community, in word and sacrament, prayer and praise, responds to the address of God in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As such, worship provides a unifying perspective--a "conceptual center," as I shall call it--from which the all-encompassing function of the church becomes understandable. All phases of the church's life and witness--all that it is, and all that it ought to be--must be understood as essentially continuous with worship. The goal of Christian education, then, is to enable the learner's participation in the life of the worshiping church, and to equip him to make responses which are in essential continuity with worship.

In developing this thesis, I shall be concerned to place the above definition of worship in biblical and theological context. Much of the first chapter will be devoted to this task, looking at biblical ideas in relation to the English word "worship," and citing the work of some recent Christian thinkers in relation to worship. It is the aim of the first chapter to provide a basic orientation toward worship as the conceptual center which informs and illuminates the rest of the

¹Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1963), pp. 5-6.

dissertation.

In Chapter II, I shall explore some of the implications of the understanding of worship which I have espoused. The thrust of this chapter will be an inquiry into the two subjects of the divine-human dialogue--God's address and man's response--seen from the perspective of worship.

Chapter III will deal with the tasks of Christian education relating to the responses which the church makes to God's address, as these responses are seen to be in continuity with worship. Focusing on the major response-modes of celebration, life-sharing, and mission, I shall describe the educational ministry as it seeks to equip the church and its members to make appropriate responses in these modes.

The fourth chapter represents my attempt to draw specifically upon the liturgical heritage of the church in order to help local decision-makers and planners to understand and develop educational strategies with worship as a conceptual center. The main task of this chapter is to construct and interpret a curriculum model based upon the "Service for the Lord's Day" in the United Presbyterian *Worshipbook*.

An Epilogue will summarize some conclusions and implications which may be drawn from the dissertation, with particular emphasis upon the role of a professional minister relating to local-church education and worship.

The subject of this dissertation presents some rather difficult bibliographical problems. It demands the contributions of thinkers from many fields: theology, church history, liturgics,

biblical scholarship, and Christian education are the most important of these. While many writings can be found which illuminate, and even state more or less explicitly, the basic idea of this paper, I have found no single writer, no school of thought, to provide an adequate framework for the development of the dissertation. For example, although worship has had a central place in the thinking of almost every trend-setting Christian educator from Horace Bushnell to the present, and these writers tend to emphasize the necessity for equipping learners for a response to God's address, none seem to have placed their educational thought explicitly in the all-encompassing perspective of worship as response.

As a result, I shall limit the discussion on the basis of subject-matter rather than on the basis of sources. The aim of this dissertation is to provide a foundation for thinking with worship as a conceptual center for education in the church--not to provide a worked-out methodology for teaching or a handbook for leaders in worship. Many important educational ideas--references to specific teaching techniques and content of lessons, for example--and many significant components of worship--such as prayer, hymnody, preaching, the sacraments, and the Church Year--will be treated only in passing or excluded entirely. A large number of authors in several fields will be called upon to contribute relevant ideas, but I shall pursue no author's thinking to its conclusion. Rather, I shall attempt to fit these contributions into the framework of the dissertation in my own way. Recognizing that such a procedure risks doing violence to the

thought of some authors, I shall be especially careful to present quoted passages and borrowed ideas in contexts which are not alien to them.

There are many others whose contributions to the development of this dissertation can be acknowledged only in a general, though heartfelt, way. Through reading and conversation with teachers, colleagues, and friends, I have found that the thinking of others has often become so entwined with my own as to make it impossible to say where one ends and the other begins. A special debt is owed to my teachers at the School of Theology at Claremont, but particularly to these three: Professor Paul B. Irwin, who first touched me with an excitement about the teaching ministry of the church which has permeated my seminary career, and who has provided invaluable direction and much-needed encouragement during my labors over this dissertation; Professor Jane Dempsey Douglass, who helped me to think systematically about worship in theological and historical perspective, helping me to channel my liturgical enthusiasm in disciplined ways; and Dean F. Thomas Trotter, who, perhaps without realizing it, fired me with a zeal for responsible scholarship throughout the breadth of Christian thought. I cherish the opportunities I have had to learn in the presence of these deeply admired teachers.

The influence of the Reverend Harry H. Green precipitated the "aha!" experience that is basic to this dissertation: the realization of the centrality of worship. The highest compliment I know to pay to a preacher is to say that he mediated the Word of God to me--and that

is what Harry Green did. He is an understanding, trusted friend.

I gladly acknowledge my deep obligation to the Reverend Herbert A. Stocker. During an intense year of service together on a pastoral staff in a very difficult situation, our relationship deepened beyond telling. A man whose life reflects the gospel he preaches, he showed me the meaning of a ministry with integrity and power--with worship as its life-giving center. A gadfly with few peers, he helped me to think through the ideas and practices which I often hastily and uncritically espoused. I count it a great privilege, as well as a source of deep joy, to number the Stocker family as members of my personal "supportive community."

My earliest and most consistent exposure to responsible churchmanship has been from my parents. To know them is to be put in touch with the excitement of continual growth and openness to new learning. Their devotion to their Lord, their continual self-giving, and their rare theological sensitivity have illumined and inspired my thinking in the development of this dissertation from beginning to end.

My wife, Sharon, has made a direct contribution to this dissertation as I have "tried out" many of its ideas on her and found in her a sympathetic but honest and able critic. Deeper, though, is the gratitude I feel for the loving, gentle encouragement she has given, without which this work could not have been done. For Sharon, my very best friend, I can only borrow the words of Proverbs: "Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all."²

²Proverbs 31:29 (RSV).

For Mother and Dad

and

For Sharon

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Despite the efforts of Christian theologians, preachers, and pastors in every generation, there remains considerable evidence that a great many Christians cannot answer the basic *functional* question about the church: What is the church *for*? Even among some of the most committed and involved churchmen, the church is frequently regarded as one worthwhile organization among many, making its demands and asserting its influence alongside of, and sometimes in competition with, other groups, agencies and causes. Even when the church's uniqueness as an institution is granted, that uniqueness is frequently understood in terms of providing religious guarantees for the prevailing values and practices of the culture in which the church is located. In the "Christian culture" of the United States, church membership is considered to be a good thing; yet few churchmen are able to explain their participation in the church in theologically meaningful terms. Fewer still are able to grasp the significance of the church's presence in the world.

Further, there is a lack of understanding of the church's essential unity of function. Churchmen have difficulty finding any point of contact among the many activities of church life, except perhaps as these activities are expected to "meet the needs" of members. Often the church is regarded as an "umbrella" providing

shelter for a collection of semi-independent organizations and pursuits, each justifying itself in quasi-scriptural terms and claiming a common goal with the others. Yet just what the goal is, and how it relates to the gospel, are seldom understood with any depth.

Even the "umbrella" concept fails when church activities and organizations appear to be moving in opposite directions. It was incomprehensible to many Presbyterians, for example, that their church, which they had thought to be committed to internal peace and harmony, should grant funds for the legal defense of a Communist. In the absence of a commonly-held theological understanding of the church's function, the actions of the major denominations seem bafflingly, and sometimes infuriatingly, inconsistent--creating a pleasant, Sunday-morning fellowship of hymn-singing and inspiration, only to threaten that fellowship by acting decisively and controversially in the world. Very often, the protests of members against the official actions of their churches reveal a near-complete lack of explicit, pervasive theology. Even more distressing is the frequent lack of clear theological rationale, for pronouncement or action, on the part of denominational and local-church decision-makers.

The church seems to have become a puzzling conglomeration of distantly-related groups, quarreling factions, and inconsistent activities, held together by custom and vaguely-defined ideals, and threatened by conflicting expectations and shaky loyalties. There is little sense of community, of mission, or of being addressed by God. In his classic book on Christian education, *The Gift of Power*, Lewis

J. Sherrill has written about " . . . the feeling of distance between people and church . . ." leading to a " . . . quest for relevance in institutional life. . . ."¹ Sherrill continues,

. . . No one can doubt that this quest has often degenerated into a mere busy-ness, an activism for activity's sake. As the activities move further and further out to the periphery of the profoundest human concern, . . . they lose the sense of being a continuum of the encounter with God. Then a fresh sense of irrelevance starts up. Losing a center from which they spontaneously spring, the activities must draw their inspiration from, and find their models in, secular life. Soon little or nothing is left to distinguish them from other legitimate secular activities.²

For too many of its members, the church has lost its center, its source of transforming power.

Confusion about the function of the church also points to a deeper confusion about the function of human life. Sherrill begins the first chapter of *The Gift of Power* with these words:

What man has lost today is himself. He is his own lost continent. Until he finds himself, all else is lost. But his plight is twice compounded, for he can find no place to stand on so that he can search for himself.³

The church, which claims the Christian gospel as well as the overarching loyalty of its members, ought to be able to provide an answer to man's lostness. But when that church itself has lost a clear sense of function expressed in terms of the theology it espouses, there remains for the church member "no place to stand on." A churchman

¹Lewis Joseph Sherrill, *The Gift of Power* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 59.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

³*Ibid.*, p. 1.

who cannot answer the question, "What is the church for?" will also be unable to answer the question, "What am *I* for?" in any meaningful, life-fulfilling way.

Recent years have witnessed a sizable exodus on the part of many who have been among the most active and committed churchmen. Others, still within the church for the moment, are beginning to voice serious questions as to whether one can be a Christian and remain within the church. In view of the distressing fragmentation and loss of purpose within the church, one tempting response is to leave. Yet for these disgruntled ex-churchmen and frustrated questioners, Thomas C. Oden has sobering words: "A person is not fully serious about Christian existence unless he is willing to work within just those present, given, corporate structures which are inadequate and need a basic revolution."⁴

. . . Admittedly, if the structures of the church do not embody the meaning of the Christian faith, then the Christian must make some realistic critical response to that false embodiment. But that does not necessarily mean one must abandon the church. . . . It might rather mean that one enters those structures all the more deliberately and vigorously.⁵

If the decision is made that in order to be a Christian one must remain within the given structures of the church, however, confusion about the church's function remains a central problem. Too many would-be reformers have chosen to "work within the system"--

⁴Thomas C. Oden, *Beyond Revolution* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), p. 19.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 22.

pushing for involvement, action, relevance--without a clear theological understanding of what the church ought to do and be when it is being the church. Aside from some specific emphases and programs which seem attractive to them, those who would change the church frequently find it as difficult to identify the theological basis of the church as their more comfortable fellow members.

Attempts at reform, however vigorously or enthusiastically pursued, will lead only to further confusion until a life-giving center is found for conceptualizing about the church. Such a "conceptual center," as it may be called, needs to have deep theological roots in the Christian heritage as well as clear contemporary application to the church's life. In a small handbook about Christian teaching, Doris J. Hill expresses well the qualifications for such a "conceptual center." It must be

. . . not only a Biblical term that reflects the central message of Scripture but also a major idea that carries within itself the possibility of enlarging meanings and multi-dimensions as modern Christians ponder the truth of Scripture and the alienated state of man and society in this generation.⁶

The foregoing statement has to do with the term, "reconciliation," as it provides the theme for the United Presbyterian "Confession of 1967." Indeed, the idea of reconciliation is attractive as a conceptual center for the church. Other candidates, however, have been proposed--mission, evangelism, fellowship, the gospel itself--to name a few. Each of these words expresses an emphasis which deserves an

⁶Doris J. Hill, *Teaching* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1967), p. 44.

important place in the church; all of them can serve, and have served admirably, as organizing concepts for thinking and writing about Christian life. The contention of this dissertation, however, is that *worship* provides a more adequate conceptual center for the church. Remembering, with J. C. Hay, that "no single word can ever be made to bear the whole weight of any given concept,"⁷ it is certainly inappropriate to say that worship can replace all the other terms listed above as candidates for centrality. Nevertheless, worship can make a compelling claim to encompass, illumine and empower everything the church is and everything it does.

WORSHIP AS A CONCEPTUAL CENTER

The idea that worship is the center of the church's life is by no means a new one. As Gregory Dix points out, the New Testament *defined* the church in terms of worship: the word ἐκκλησία, translated in the English New Testament with "church," referred quite specifically to the community gathered to take part in the liturgy. Not until the third century did the Christian understanding of ἐκκλησία come to refer to other activities of the church.⁸ To quote Gordon A. MacInnes, "In the New Testament the church emerges as a worshiping community, and continuing as such, it is most itself when engaged in worship."⁹

⁷J. C. Hay, *Koinonia in the New Testament* (n.p.: Stewardship Committee, Canadian Council of Churches, n.d.), p. 1.

⁸Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Black, 1945), pp. 19-20.

⁹Gordon A. MacInnes, *A Guide to Worship in Camp and Conference* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 19.

In saying that the church is present when the Word is rightly preached and heard and the sacraments are rightly administered¹⁰ the Reformers likewise defined the church in terms of worship--for "Word and sacrament" are the basic events of worship.

Recent writers, too, in many fields relating to the church, have insisted upon the centrality of worship. Karl Barth has written,

. . . It is not only in worship that the community is edified and edifies itself. But it is here first that this continually takes place. And if it does not take place here, it does not take place anywhere.¹¹

Wilhelm Hahn maintains that " . . . worship . . . is the life-giving centre of the congregation."¹² John Macquarrie insists that worship is central not only for the church, but for the entirety of life:

. . . Worship, in which God comes among us, is the center of existence. . . . From this center, there move out concentric rings, as it were, through all the concerns of life to its very boundaries. The whole of life is thus conformed to the center. . . .¹³

Christian educators have long stressed the importance of worship. Iris Cully states simply that " . . . worship is the center

¹⁰John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), IV:i.9, p. 1023.

¹¹Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1958), IV:2, p. 638.

¹²Wilhelm Hahn, *Worship and Congregation* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), p. 9.

¹³John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), pp. 434-35.

for the life of the Christian community . . . ,"¹⁴ and Dana Prom Smith warns that "if worship is not central, . . . the gospel of Jesus Christ faces an uphill battle for its rightful priority in the life of a congregation."¹⁵ Relating more specifically to the educational ministry of the church, Wayne R. Rood insists that "worship . . . is the goal of the teacher, the ground of the process, and the heartbeat of the learner's own Christian life."¹⁶ Finally, James D. Smart offers these words:

. . . Christian education . . . must be a step by step growth into the life which the Church has with God in worship. Education into the Church is initiation into a worshiping community. Before the Church can do anything or say anything, it must have its being, and it has its being, in worship. . . .¹⁷

All of these writers--and many more--seem to be convinced that the essence of the church is to be found in the community gathered for worship. It is disturbing, therefore, to note how seldom the centrality of worship seems to *pervade* their thinking. The tendency is to treat worship as a separate category of church life--an admittedly important one, of course, but certainly not central in the sense that it permeates, informs, illumines, authenticates, and is

¹⁴Iris V. Cully, *Christian Worship and Church Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 159.

¹⁵Dana Prom Smith, *The Educated Servant* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1967), p. 89.

¹⁶Wayne R. Rood, *The Art of Teaching Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 145.

¹⁷James D. Smart, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 119-20.

authenticated by the whole life of the church and the individual lives of Christians.

It is the intention of this dissertation to take very seriously the idea that worship is the vital center of the church's life--not simply an important activity among others, but the one activity which is at the heart of the church, from which all other activities take their meaning. With worship as a conceptual center, confusion about the function of the church may very well give way to an all-encompassing, theologically responsible conception of Christian existence.

TOWARD A DEFINITION OF WORSHIP

The task of the remainder of this introductory chapter is to develop a definition of worship. An appropriate definition will be consistent with the usage of the word in the church as well as based upon a sound biblical and theological understanding of worship. An effort will be made in the following pages, therefore, to show that the conception of worship which is central to this dissertation is in accord with the mainstream of thought in the biblical and theological disciplines. Attention will be given first to those biblical words which have been translated with the English word "worship," and then to the concept of worship as it has been developed by Christian thinkers in several fields. Finally, a working definition will be proposed which will provide the conceptual center for the balance of the dissertation.

Worship in the Bible and the Early Church

There are two major families of biblical words which have been translated "worship" in the English Bible. The first of these includes the Greek προσκυνεῖν and its Hebrew equivalent, *hishtakchawoth*. These words originally referred to the physical acts of "bowing down" or "prostrating oneself," before God or men. Later they came to denote the worship of God exclusively, with the emphasis on humbling oneself in adoration, signifying inward self-surrender as well as outward gestures of obeisance.¹⁸

The second family of words ordinarily translated with the English word "worship" includes λατρεία and λειτουργία, and their Old Testament counterpart, 'abodah. It would seem, however, that these words are more accurately translated "service" than "worship." As C. F. D. Moule points out,

. . . the modern Christian application of terms such as 'divine service' or 'a service' to specific acts of public worship may tend to obscure the fact that in its New Testament context the word 'service' does literally mean the work of servants. One of the regular words for worship, 'abodah, is derived from the same root as the word for the suffering 'servant' ['ebed] or, for that matter, any slave or servant. . . . And in the New Testament the two groups of words, λατρεία, λατρεύειν . . . and λειτουργία, λειτουργός, λειτουργεῖν, both concern simply the rendering of service--the latter, in secular literature, having behind it a long history of service to the state, and being used in the New Testament of service to men as well as to God.¹⁹

While early usage applied λατρεία to the service of a hired worker or

¹⁸C. F. D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1958), p. 15.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 80.

slave,²⁰ the literal meaning of λειτουργία (from which the English "liturgy" is derived) is "the work of the people," referring to service which a citizen was required to perform to his state.²¹ The early Greek-speaking church came to use both words as technical terms for worship; λειτουργία, however, was often used to denote specific roles for worshipers. Dix maintains that as early as the first century, " . . . every 'order' from the layman to the bishop has its own special 'liturgy,' without the proper fulfillment of each of which the worship of the whole church cannot be fulfilled."²² "Liturgy" in the early church, then, was understood as an unmistakably *corporate* action including essential contributions from every member of the worshiping congregation.

There is another word which, though seldom translated "worship," was used very often in the early church in connection with worship. It is εὐχαριστία, thanksgiving. William Nicholls maintains that εὐχαριστία, more than the other biblical words discussed above, expresses the unique character of Christian worship. "It is not accidental," Nicholls writes, "that this is the word which came to be used, not long after the New Testament period, for the principal

²⁰William Nicholls, *Jacob's Ladder* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1958), p. 15.

²¹R. D. Whitehorn, "The Church at Worship," in Ronald C. D. Jasper (ed.), *The Renewal of Worship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 14. See also Massey H. Shepherd, Jr., *The Worship of the Church* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Seabury Press, 1952), pp. 48-49.

²²Dix, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

Christian service, which originated in the actions of our Lord at the Last Supper and His Passion on the Cross."²³ It is this word, of course, from which "eucharist" is derived, denoting the liturgy in which the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is central.

The use of εὐχαριστία to refer to the characteristic rite of Christian worship places emphasis upon an understanding of worship which is uniquely biblical. As Nicholls expresses it,

. . . the Biblical view of worship . . . is distinguished from all other religious understandings of the cultus by the fact that the worship of God's people in the Bible is always represented as the worship offered by those who have been redeemed. Thus it would be no paradox to say that for us worship does not start with man, but with God, who has taken the initiative to which we respond when we worship Him.²⁴

If God has taken the initiative in the redemption of men, it follows that the function of worship is not to "save souls"; nor is it a self-sufficient offering to God in order to please him or prod him into action. Rather, worship is a response of thanksgiving to the action God has already taken--to the redemption he has already offered. The word εὐχαριστία, then, refers not only to the eucharist as a specific rite, but also expresses aptly " . . . that whole movement of thanksgiving towards God the Creator and Redeemer which ought to characterize the members of Christ."²⁵

Using these words in their terminology of worship, the Bible

²³Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 46.

and the early church contributed two other essentials to the Christian understanding of worship: the idea that worship is continuous with life, and the idea that worship is central to Christian existence. It is significant that none of the words mentioned above is specifically theological; all of them were used originally to denote human acts and attitudes quite apart from worship. That these words are appropriated rather than passed over in favor of "religious" terms to describe worship (θεραπεύειν and θεράπων, for example, used frequently in pagan literature to denote homage to the gods, but notably absent in this connection from the New Testament²⁶), points to an important conviction in the early Christian community: there is no essential distinction between worship and life. Moule describes this conviction in connection with the Biblical terms connoting work or service:

Worship is work. But, conversely, all work done and all life lived for God's sake is, in essence, worship. That there is any distinction at all between worship and work, or, for that matter, any other aspect of life, is due only to the fact that we are creatures of successiveness, moving in time and space, and unable to concentrate on more than a little at a time. In heaven there can be no such distinction. . . . But here on earth it is necessary to set aside specific times for the rendering to God of articulate praise and for the conscious dedication to Him of our whole life and work. . . . Since we live within the narrow limits of human capacities, the only practical way to hallow the whole is to bring a token portion of it consciously to God. . . .²⁷

These human limitations constitute the sole justification for drawing any distinction at all between those acts in which the church is

²⁶Moule, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

consciously worshipping, and the rest of life which is not normally described as worship. As Moule puts it, ". . . it is death to Christian worship when, forgetting this, we allow it to become detached from life."²⁸

If, in the early church view, worship is not only continuous with life but also that movement of thankful response to God in which the church consciously brings its whole life to him, then it is appropriate to regard worship as the center of the church--the one activity which gives meaning and direction to all else. In describing the church, ἐκκλησία, as the community gathered for worship,²⁹ Christians in the first three centuries recognized that worship is the *sine qua non* of the church. When worship is no longer regarded as a separate category of action or experience apart from the rest of life, but rather as the one activity in which everything in life is offered to God as a response to his initiative, then it is by no means an overstatement to say, with Nicholls, that "worship is the supreme and only indispensable activity of the Christian Church."³⁰

The language used in the Bible and in the early church points to a many-sided conception of worship. From προσκυνεῖν comes the idea of self-surrender and humble adoration, as well as the conviction that such adoration may appropriately be expressed in outward, physical

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁹See above, p. 6.

³⁰Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

acts. Λατρεία points to the essential place of service--even strenuous work--as the obligation of worshipers. Λειτουργία continues the emphasis on service but adds the distinctive note of corporateness--involving the responsible, active participation of a whole community of believers in contrast both to private prayers and devotions and to the "performer-audience model" of worship. Christian worship is characteristically "action" as well as "experience." With εὐχαριστία, emphasis is given to worship as a movement of thanksgiving in response to God's initiative of creative and redemptive love. Finally, the Biblical and early-church terminology places worship at the very heart of the church: not only is it essentially one with Christian life, but worship illumines and validates all of the church's doing and being.

In view of the multi-faceted concept of worship which emerges from the biblical terminology as developed in the thinking of the primitive Christian community, it is difficult to find a single word in a modern language which expresses that concept without distortion. In this respect the English language, not generally known for rich theological vocabulary, outranks many other languages in the aptness of its word, "worship."³¹ No single word, of course, is adequate standing alone; there is always the need for definition and interpretation. Yet through its derivation (from the Anglo-Saxon *weorthscipe*,

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

"the acknowledgment of worth"³²) and its history of usage in English-language theology, the word "worship" bears well the content of the rich conception which has come from the early Greek-speaking church.

Worship in Recent Christian Thought

Christian thinkers in recent years have frequently described worship in ways that appear to be consistent with the biblical understandings discussed above. Writers in several of the theological disciplines, although not always citing the Hebrew and Greek words which have been employed in connection with worship, seem often to have expressed the meanings which have come to surround those words.

The assertion that worship is an act and not simply an experience--an idea suggested by several of the biblical terms--is often found in recent theological writings. A booklet authored by eleven contributors to the contemporary discussion of worship states that "worship is an action in which people take part. It is not something observed or attended but is something we do."³³ Ralph R. Sundquist, Jr., writing in the field of Christian education, insists,

We must scrupulously distinguish . . . between authentic worship and the feelings of awe or wonder or simply inner contentment and peace that are sometimes thought to be worship. We have been more patient than faithful in putting up with the term 'worship experience' and with the actuality that it represents. When we think of a worship experience,

³²Ralph R. Sundquist, Jr., *Whom God Chooses* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1964), p. 72.

³³Vernon P. Alexander and others, *The Church at Worship in an Urban Age* (San Francisco: Presbytery of San Francisco, 1970), p. 3.

we are centering our attention not on God, but on the worshiper. . . . This is why so much effort is sometimes given to the dimming of lights and the placement of candles, [and,] . . . the soft playing of what can only be called mood music. All this regard for the worshiper's experience is actually the repudiation of the meaning of worship. . . .³⁴

These writers are not suggesting that worship is *not* an experience, but that it is not simply or primarily to be regarded in terms of mood or intellectual stimulation. What they are rejecting is the over-emphasis on "providing an experience" for worshipers--too often displayed by church decision-makers in their thinking and planning--which has led church members to expect certain sensory, emotional or intellectual components in worship to the exclusion of almost any sense of responsibility for active participation. These writers are calling for a profound re-centering of the attention in worship toward acknowledging the worth of God.

A related idea is that worship is service--both in itself and as it is authenticated by acts of service in the world. The familiar lines of John Greenleaf Whittier express this idea: "To worship rightly is to love each other; /Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer."³⁵ If worship truly is service, and not simply a formal gesture of devotion, then it is to be understood as continuous with those acts of service which Christians are to perform in the world. The biblical terms convey this meaning, and it is echoed by recent

³⁴Sundquist, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

³⁵John Greenleaf Whittier, "Worship," in his *Complete Poetical Works* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1894), pp. 429-30, stanza 13, lines 3-4.

writings in the church. A document from the Consultation on Church Union, for example, asserts that "all of a Christian's life must be expressed, tested, and offered in worship, which cannot be separated from acts of love toward one another and toward the world."³⁶ William Stringfellow makes much the same point, but enlarges the continuity of worship to include the totality of life:

The actions and relationships characteristic of the gathered, sacramental life of the Church in worship are the precedent for the actions and relationships of members of the company of the Church in their involvement in the common life of the world. And, at the same time, the specific involvement of Christians in the life and work of the world every day is the content of that which they offer to God in the corporate worship of the Church.

. . . . What Christians offer to God in worship, both in the sanctuary and in their daily work, is everything--the whole of their lives-- . . . that which seems good and worthy of themselves as well as that which seems to them evil or unworthy.
 . . .³⁷

Worship is service. Its worthiness, however, does not consist in its goodness or appropriateness, but solely in the fact that it is offered to the gracious God. Thus the meaning of "service" itself is transformed: to serve God is not to engage in meritorious activity, but, acknowledging his graciousness, to place every action and every relationship within the context of his sanctifying love.

In view of the continuity between worship and all life, there can be no essential distinction made between worship and the actions

³⁶ Consultation on Church Union, *Principles of Church Union* (n.p.: Forward Movement, 1966), p. 30.

³⁷ William Stringfellow, *Instead of Death* (New York: Seabury Press, 1963), p. 48.

of individuals. Yet it is helpful, for the purposes of definition, to distinguish worship as a *corporate* activity--continuous, but not to be confused, with private devotions and prayers. When he says, "Worship is offered to God not simply by individuals, but by a people, and by individuals as members of that people,"³⁸ Nicholls is expressing one of the basic meanings of λειτουργία as it was used in the early church. Worship, however, is not simply one corporate activity among many; it is the primary manifestation of the church's corporateness. "At worship the church experiences its deepest and most basic level of existence as a Christian community."³⁹ Such corporateness as the church has in its other activities--in class and committee, "fellowship group" and prayer group--has its foundation in the corporateness of worship. If worship is not truly corporate but only a collection of individuals who "like the music" or "enjoy the sermon," the life of the church will never deepen beyond a bland togetherness.

The characteristic of worship as joyful thanksgiving, εὐχαριστία, is emphasized by a recent tendency to describe worship as celebration.

Worship is a festal occasion, a time of joy and conviviality. It is not solemn. . . . Worship is celebration, because it expresses the joy in what the Spirit has done and is doing in the world, and because the last words of history are new life and victory. Christians, therefore, do not live out their lives in morbid dramatization of that somber sabbath before Easter; Christ has set us free for faith, hope, and love. . . .⁴⁰

³⁸Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

³⁹The Cooperative Curriculum Project, *The Church's Educational Ministry* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1965), p. 233.

⁴⁰Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

Ross Snyder writes, "Celebration is living with a certain headlong vitality, sensing immediacy of the Innermost Moving of all existence."⁴¹ Although its elements include wonder, delight, and exhilaration, however, celebration is not the entertainment of those who " . . . gape and roar at the fireworks others send up to startle and amuse them."⁴² It is the joyous *εὐχαριστία* of the worshiping community perceiving the presence of God embracing and empowering the totality of life.

Probably the most persistent emphasis in the recent discussion of worship is that worship is a response to God--another facet of the meaning of *εὐχαριστία*. As Harry G. and Betty L. Goodykoontz put it, "Worship is our response in faith within the community to the grace of God."⁴³ If worship is a response to God, however, it is assumed that God does something first to which the response is made. The element of *address*, then, is primary, and "only in the second place may we speak of our response."⁴⁴

Worship is characterized by continual movement from address to response. As Wayne R. Rood puts it, "Worship is the divine-human dialogue brought to awareness."⁴⁵ Rood explains, "Overt acts of

⁴¹Ross Snyder, *Contemporary Celebration* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 31.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴³Harry G. and Betty L. Goodykoontz, *Training to Teach* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 41.

⁴⁴Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁴⁵Rood, *op. cit.*, p. 138; original in italics.

worship, combining and vivifying words and symbols, bring to life the dialogue of God's address to man and man's responses."⁴⁶ The dialogic character of worship means that the response is made not only to God's past actions which are perceived and interpreted, but to God's present activity even in the midst of worship, understood as immediate, personal address.⁴⁷ Iris Cully writes, "Worship consists of something that God does and the way by which men respond. God's action does not simply precede the service, but it is also to be found in the service."⁴⁸

Some writers, acknowledging the initiative of God in worship, nevertheless emphasize human freedom in making the response. John Macquarrie asserts that

. . . the character of worship is clearly one of response to the God who has first drawn near to us and addressed us; yet the response is on the personal level, for we are free existents. Worship is not an homage that is exacted from us, but our free response to God's action upon us and in us. . . . There is indeed the divine initiative, but it completes and realizes itself only in the free cooperative response of the human existent.⁴⁹

Certainly worship is not coerced. Other writers, however, prefer to emphasize the activity of God as not only encompassing the "address" side of worship but also enabling the human response. In the words of Robert McAfee Brown, " . . . we cannot describe worship

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁴⁷Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁴⁸Iris V. Cully, *The Dynamics of Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p. 96.

⁴⁹Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, pp. 432-33.

simply as 'our response.' It is that. But since God is the God of grace, our response is a response that he himself initiates in us."⁵⁰

Wilhelm Hahn seems to go a step further:

. . . Worship is first and foremost God's service to us. It is an action by God, which is directed towards us. Our activity in worship can be nothing other than reaction and response, the consequence of God's activity. The two sides in worship are therefore in no sense equal. . . .⁵¹

Hardin, Quillian, and White express the idea succinctly: "Christian worship is the doing of God."⁵²

In the view of Nicholls, the human activity in worship is not only enabled, but also fulfilled and made acceptable by God through the incarnation of Christ:

. . . It is not the case that Christ provides the Word, and we the response; He has also fulfilled on man's behalf the response to the Word He brought and was. When we respond in the offering of ourselves, our offering is made in the Body of Christ, and is incorporated into the offering of Christ; conversely, our self-offering has reality only because it is the self-offering of Christ in us.⁵³

Whether the address of God is to be understood as half of a dialogue, calling forth a free response from worshipers, or whether it is viewed as complete divine participation in the response as well, God's activity is regarded by the writers cited above as the primary

⁵⁰Robert McAfee Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 131-32.

⁵¹Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁵²H. Grady Hardin, Joseph D. Quillian, Jr., and James F. White, *The Celebration of the Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 14.

⁵³Nicholls, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

focus of worship. In this respect, the Christian heritage is not to be ignored:

We do not live in the past, but we do have a past. We are continuous with the man Jesus, and to those who have followed in his train. While we translate the meanings of the past into the present so that our faith makes sense today, we do not deny our heritage and its symbols. So our worship is based on events, ideas, values--our celebrations are not purely existential happenings--we are celebrating meanings that have come down through the centuries and have meaning for us today.⁵⁴

The activity of God as discerned in the heritage, however, comes to the worshipping community as a present Word. In present events and relationships, moreover, God's address to the worshipping community is likewise perceived. An important task related to worship, therefore, is to interpret both past and present events theologically.

. . . The congregation comes from the world where God has been active and where the issues of life are joined. In the worship experience the laity are celebrating the reality of God's activity in the world, but they are also seeking to identify among the various forces (some of which menace and some of which build up life) those which are the activity of God.⁵⁵

It should be pointed out that this kind of theological interpretation is not so simple as sorting out menacing events from non-menacing ones. The central criterion for such interpretation is the gospel of Jesus Christ, including both Good Friday and Easter. Events which are perceived as threatening, as well as those which are reassuring, may disclose the activity of God and serve as vehicles for his address.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion the conceptions of

⁵⁴Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 8.

worship expressed by contemporary participants in several disciplines of Christian thought appear often to be consistent with their biblical and early-church counterparts. One striking feature that emerges from the discussion, moreover, is the great breadth of these conceptions. Both the ancient and the more recent thinkers have understood worship in ways which are not necessarily limited to the formal, ordered acts which are ordinarily regarded as worship. In fact, both seem deliberately to have described worship in terms which may appropriately be applied to the totality of Christian life. The centrality of worship for the church is unmistakably clear. In Hahn's words,

One of the results of recent developments in theology and in the understanding of the Church is that almost all those who are concerned with these matters agree in the view that worship is the centre of the Church's life.⁵⁶

The concept of worship which has emerged in the foregoing investigation is provocative and potentially fruitful--a promising answer to present confusion about the church's function. Not only the concept itself, but the very conviction of its centrality, is firmly rooted in Christian thought from the Bible to the present day.

A Working Definition

Christian worship is a dialogue between God and the gathered Christian community in which that community, in word and sacrament, prayer and praise, responds to the address of God in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the center of the church and the center

⁵⁶Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

of *Christian life*. This definition is largely a summing-up of the major points of the above discussion.

Several features of the definition are worthy of note. First, the definition is of *Christian* worship. The question as to whether the term "worship" may be applied appropriately to the cultic practices of other faiths is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Worship is essentially continuous with the other responses the church makes to God, not an isolated category of response. Definitions ought to function as clarifiers of language, however, and it would be confusing to include the gamut of the church's responses to God within worship. The definition, therefore, limits worship to the formal, ordered acts of the gathered community described as "word and sacrament, prayer and praise." A great variety of activities may be included--from the rehearsal of an ancient ritual to the blowing up of balloons. The specific character of the activities, however, are not what makes them appropriate components of worship; what is important is their *setting* within the community of faith gathered regularly and consciously to listen and respond to God, their *context* in an ordered relationship of acknowledging God's address and responding to it, and their *intentionality* of making a response to God in the light of the gospel.

The key to the definition is dialogue. The movement in worship is always from address to response, as God speaks and acts toward the community and the community speaks and acts in reply. God speaks through the Christian heritage as it is remembered; through

present events, relationships and situations as they are interpreted; and through the Christian hope as it is proclaimed. The nature of the community's response is determined by the mode and character of God's address as it is perceived by the community.

The above definition is the conceptual center of this dissertation, to be kept in mind in the following chapters whenever the word "worship" is used.

CHAPTER II

ADDRESS AND RESPONSE: THE DYNAMICS OF WORSHIP

Worship is a dialogue. It is a two-subject event, presupposing a dynamic relation between God and man. God is not the "object" of worship, as if he were a static Thing to be regarded with reverence; God is the ever-acting Subject who addresses man. Neither is man the "object" of God's address; he, too, is a responsible subject. Worship is a dialogue between active selves, characterized by God's address and man's response.

The divine-human dialogue is not limited to worship, however; it encompasses the whole of life. God is continually addressing his people and calling for a response, and this dialogic relationship is central to the Christian understanding of life. Emil Brunner points out that in the biblical view, God and man are selves-in-relation:

The Biblical revelation . . . contains no doctrine of God as He is in Himself [*Gott-an-sich*], none of man as he is in himself [*Menschen-an-sich*]. It always speaks of God as the God who approaches man [*Gott-zum-Menschen-hin*] and of man as the man who comes from God [*Menschen-von-Gott-her*]. . . .

. . . God 'steps' into the world, into a relation with men: He deals with them, and in a certain sense also against them; but He acts always in relation *to them*. . . .

Similarly, men are also considered as those who are not something in and for themselves, but only as those who from the first are placed in a specific relation to God. . . . Their action . . . is always understood as action in relation to God.¹

¹Emil Brunner, *The Divine-Human Encounter* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), pp. 45-46, 47-48. (Phrases in brackets are provided by the translator.)

While the address of God and the response of man may be discussed separately, they must never be isolated from each other.

The address of God and the response of man constitute a relationship of responsible selves. This relationship differs markedly, therefore, from the connection between "stimulus" and "response" found in some theories of behavior. This is no mechanical, automatic response "caused" by a stimulus. Rather, in Robert R. Boehlke's words, the response to God's address " . . . is the free, courageous response of an active self struggling to determine the character of the response which he will permit himself to make."²

Although the human response is free, however, it is not independent--otherwise it would not be a response. The relationship is not one of mutual address; the address is God's alone. Divine-human dialogue happens when the human self takes that address seriously enough to respond *to it* and *in terms of it*.

There is a dynamic quality to the divine-human relationship. When God's address is regarded only as doctrine or information, however, it becomes a plaintive soliloquy, and the dynamism is lost. God's disclosure comes in the context of a relationship which is appropriately described not in terms of doctrine, but in terms of story. Brunner writes:

. . . In the Bible this two-sided relation between God and man is not developed as doctrine, but rather is set forth as happening in a story. . . . It is not a timeless or static

²Robert R. Boehlke, *Theories of Learning in Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 98.

relation, arising from the world of ideas--and only for such is doctrine an adequate form: rather the relation is an event, and hence narration is the proper form to describe it. [The Bible's] concern is not with a relation which exists in and for itself, but with a relation which (so to say) occurs. . . .³

Not only narration, but the happy vehicles of drama, poetry, and song, are fitting ways to tell of the encounter. These modes of expression have a commonality in that they are not primarily vehicles for passive observance or intellectual judgment, but for celebration.

The task of this chapter is to explore the two subjects of the divine-human dialogue in some detail. Although God's address and man's response will be treated separately, their intimate relationship will be acknowledged and affirmed.

THE ADDRESS OF GOD

No words are adequate to describe the activity of God. In fact, if God is God and not a grand projection of human longings, all that language can do is point and suggest. One must choose, therefore, among inadequate words the least inadequate vehicles to interpret the divine-human encounter. In order for meanings to be communicated, ordinary words must be used; yet because they are talking about God, they must be used in extraordinary ways.

Revelation, Word, and Address

A major task of theology involves the search for these "least-inadequate" words and their placement in contexts of meaning in order

³Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

that faith's search for understanding may be illuminated. There are two terms which have had an especially important place when it comes to speaking about God's activity. They are "revelation" and "word." These two terms have had a long currency in the theological vocabulary, and there is no sign that they will soon be discarded. Some attention must be given to the meanings suggested by these words.

Revelation is a disclosure, an unveiling. That which has been hidden is now uncovered. Objects may be revealed, with the simple meaning that they are exposed to view. Facts and ideas may be revealed in the sense that they are capable of being examined. With persons, however--when personhood is not violated--the unveiling is always a self-disclosure, a personal act of volition within a personal relationship. Reinhold Niebuhr enlarges on this point:

. . . When dealing with persons, . . . we are dealing with a 'Thou' of such freedom and uniqueness that a mere external observation of its behavior will not only leave the final essence of that person obscure but will actually falsify it, since such observation would debase what is really free subject into a mere object. This person, this other 'Thou' cannot be understood until he speaks to us. . . .⁴

So it is with God; he may not be known through external surveillance, but only as he chooses to reveal himself.⁵ Revelation is a disclosure "about" God in the sense that God's activity is illumined, but it is more essentially a disclosure "from" God as an act of his will, and

⁴Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), I, 130.

⁵H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 155.

"of" God, for it is ultimately God himself who is disclosed.

Revelation establishes an intimate relation between the divine Self and the human self. That relation, however, does not become an identity. "There is always . . . a separation of selfhood," as Sherrill puts it: "man is not himself a god, but faces God; and if in facing God he is drawn toward God he is not absorbed into God."⁶ Revelation comes from beyond the human self and from beyond the world of human life. Yet God is not wholly external to man. Sherrill continues, ". . . the doctrine of the Spirit of God means that God as Personal Being is perceived as present within man as personal being, present within man yet not identical with man."⁷ Revelation, therefore, although it comes from outside man, is communicable to man, and God's activity may be discerned in human experience.

The activity of God has often been related conceptually to the phenomenon of speech. In Christian theology this relation is most frequently expressed in the phrase, "the Word of God." Barth has written,

The Word of God is the Word that God *spoke*, *speaks*, and *will speak* in the midst of all men. . . . His work is not mute; rather, it speaks with a loud voice. Since only God can do what he does, only he can say in his work what he says. . . . His work and action are at the same time his speech. . . .⁸

⁶Lewis Joseph Sherrill, *The Gift of Power* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 69.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1964), pp. 14-15.

Human experience verifies the intimate relationship of action and language, of gesture and speech. If "actions speak"--often "louder than words"--then expression "the Word of God" is suitable in relation to God's activity.

To say that "actions speak" does not exhaust the matter, however. It is also often true that "language acts." It is effective: it evokes a response. Much of everyday discourse has this character: it not only communicates information, but it "does something." Ebeling and Fuchs seem to be pointing in this direction when they use the expressions "word event" and "language event"--language not only discloses meanings in an interpersonal encounter, but in fact it constitutes that encounter and brings it to awareness.⁹

Because God's action toward persons is effective but non-coercive--calling for a response while preserving the freedom of the person who is addressed--the metaphor "the Word of God" is again appropriate. As C. H. Dodd says, "By means of words, and normally by no other means, one person can affect another without infringing upon his personal independence."¹⁰ God's movement toward man elicits, but does not force, a response. The character of the response is a matter of free decision. Brunner makes this point: " . . . The Word . . . is that communication which does not convert the subject into an object;

⁹Ernst Fuchs, "Response to the American Discussion," in James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (eds.), *The New Hermeneutic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 233.

¹⁰C. H. Dodd, *The Bible To-Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 105.

but when it is accepted it stimulates self-activity. The Word . . . reserves an area for creaturely self-decision. . . ."¹¹

The identification of God's work with his speech is prominent in the Bible. In the creation account of the first chapter of Genesis, God is represented as creating the world through speech ("Let there be . . ."¹²). The name of God revealed to Moses--*YHWH*, related to the verb *hayah*, "to be"--is both a sophisticated bit of language and an explicit reference to God's nature as active Being.¹³ The prologue to the Fourth Gospel identifies the Word not only with God's activity in history, but with God himself.¹⁴ The biblical references make it clear that God's "speech" is not merely a revelation of data concerning God; nor is it simply a disclosure of God's activity. The Word of God is God himself:

. . . God in His Word does not speak 'something' but Himself. . . . God delivers to us no course of lectures in dogmatic theology; He submits to us no confession of faith. He does say to me, 'I am the Lord, thy God.' . . .¹⁵

Christian experience affirms that this union of person, action, and speech is fulfilled in incarnation. Philip H. Phenix writes, " . . . Language is related to incarnation not only through the use of symbols perceptible to physical senses and through the fulfillment of words in action, but also through the consummation of speech in the

¹¹Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹²Genesis 1:3; etc.

¹³Exodus 3:24.

¹⁴John 1:1.

¹⁵Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

being of a person."¹⁶ Christians confess that God's self-disclosure is consummated in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

The term "revelation" has emphasized the self-disclosure of God, and the expression "Word of God" has pointed to the language-character of God's being and activity as well as the fulfillment of revelation in the incarnation of Christ. These are indispensable meanings for the Christian understanding of existence. The word "address," however, can shed further light upon these meanings.

The Word of God is not a response to some other word. One may speak of "the Word of God and the word of man,"¹⁷ but the two subjects of that phrase are neither equal nor interchangeable. God's Word is primary; man's word is secondary and derivative. "This is revelation," says Barth: "the event of God's sovereign initiative."¹⁸

It is popular in some circles to speak of religious literature as the record of man's search for God. Yet from the biblical perspective human life is just as often characterized by the *avoidance* of God. God's self-disclosure is dependent upon neither man's search nor man's preparedness.¹⁹ Revelation does not come as an "aha!" at

¹⁶Philip H. Phenix, *Education and the Worship of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 48.

¹⁷Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957). Significantly, the English title is not a literal translation of Barth's which is *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie*.

¹⁸Karl Barth, *God in Action* (New York: Round Table Press, 1936), p. 19.

¹⁹Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

the end of a long quest, but it is itself God's gracious act. As H. Richard Niebuhr says, "When we find out that we are no longer thinking him, but that he first thought us, that is revelation."²⁰ The conviction that the divine-human dialogue is enabled by God's independent initiative is emphasized when the word "address" is used.

A related concept is that God's speaking is an active, directed word addressed *to* his people and *for* them. God's movement toward man is not a word thrown to the wind to be picked up by chance, but a deliberate address. Boehlke puts it in these words: " . . . God is scarcely content to be calling down the empty rain-barrels of the universe, as it were, in order to delight in the echo! He reveals himself to man and for the sake of man."²¹ Again, as Barth says, "Regardless of whether it is heard or not, it is, in itself, directed to all men."²²

The Word of God as address, moreover, is perceived both as judgment and as redemption. The pervasive reality of sin in human life, viewed in relation to the holiness of God, make a word of judgment necessary and inevitable. God takes human sin with utmost seriousness, as the Cross amply testifies. Yet judgment is not the last word: the Word of God addressed to man is not finally the sentence of a vengeful judge but the beckoning of a loving Father.

²⁰H. R. Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

²¹Boehlke, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

²²Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 14.

The Christian confession is that God's address is not sheer condemnation nor simply a call to repentance, but a gracious offering of himself for the redemption of man.

It was pointed out above that the Word of God calls for a response while preserving the freedom of those to whom it is directed.²³ To speak of God's Word as address emphasizes this point, but adds the conviction that revelation completes itself only as it is responded to. Dodd says,

. . . God makes an approach to man in a way that commands his attention and elicits a response of some kind, positive or negative. The response is not forced. Man remains free. But in proportion as he responds the Word proves a creative factor in history.²⁴

An address, qua address, is not self-sufficient. If God's address is truly to be an address and not a soliloquy, a human response is indispensable.

There seems to be a tension between this idea that God's address requires a human response for its completion, and the idea that revelation is not dependent upon conditions such as human readiness to respond. A resolution of this tension is suggested, however, in the Christian conviction that it is the address itself which enables and informs the response: "It is the Spirit of God dwelling in the human heart that alone makes it possible for a man to respond rightly to God. . . ."²⁵ Christians confess that their response is itself a gift

²³See above, p. 32.

²⁴Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

²⁵James D. Smart, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 38.

from God. This is no coercion, but the establishment of a relationship wherein an answering human word is enabled and the original Word of revelation completes itself.

So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.²⁶

Settings for God's Address

The address of God has a context in the divine-human relation, but it is also perceived within a setting, a particular situation, in human life. God's address is apprehended both as an interpretation of the situation and as a call for a response.²⁷

It is misleading to list settings for God's address if such a listing is presumed to limit God's activity. The whole range of human experience has a theological dimension, for God acts in all of life. Nevertheless, it is helpful to note some of the situations in which the Christian community has most keenly sensed God's working and addressing. Theology, when it is true to itself, is not a speculative exercise; as Iris Cully states, "Since the person speaking is always one who has responded to God, what he has to say is never theoretical. He is not enumerating the possible ways in which God might act, but witnessing to the way he has known God to act."²⁸ To enumerate the

²⁶Isaiah 55:11 (RSV).

²⁷Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

²⁸Iris V. Cully, *The Dynamics of Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p. 68.

settings in which God's address is perceived, therefore, is not to limit that address, but simply to seek an understanding of the situations in which the divine-human encounter has come to particular awareness.

Events in the world provide a setting for revelation. Some religious life-styles call for a withdrawal from the world, a disassociation from history, and a repudiation of worldly events and realities as having no significance for, and as being perhaps a barrier to, the encounter with God. These life-styles are not Christian. On the contrary, Christians affirm that God is present and active within the temporal, tangible world of things and events. "We are not called upon to deny this world, or to withdraw from its urgent realities. If we take our stand within the actual, concrete order of history to which we belong as human beings, we encounter God."²⁹ Ross Snyder writes,

It is in the midst of the world that God is acting. It is in the midst of the world that God is taking the evil and the disasters and the warfare and the brutalities, and transforming them by his love and creativeness toward something new and fresh. This is where God is and where Christ is. And therefore we know them only to the degree that we get into the midst of the world.³⁰

God encounters people in the arena of human history. The world of nature--the awesome grandeur and order of the created universe--may, of course, speak eloquently of God, but it speaks only in

²⁹Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

³⁰Ross Snyder, *Young People and Their Culture* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 31.

a general way. It is in the dynamism of history, where events impinge upon human lives, that God's self-giving, transforming, renewing activity is revealed to faith. All the events of history--past and present--are possible settings for revelation, including both events which appear catastrophic and those which appear propitious, threatening situations as well as reassuring ones. Joseph D. Ban makes this point with reference to revolutionary events:

Man Christians deplore today's revolutionary changes. They . . . sincerely insist that stability, tranquility, and order are God's intention for mankind. It may come as a shock for such people to discover that God frequently works through revolutions, both the peaceful variety and the violent kind. The witness of both the Old and New Testaments is quite clear that revolutionary changes in society and history are often the intention of God.³¹

If one expects God to act only in pleasant happenings or in what is regarded as "religious experience," one is likely to miss the encounter. God's judgment and his self-giving love may be revealed even in the most frightening and un-religious of situations, and, as Barth says, "He desires to be known even in the profligate, degenerate, and confused ways of men."³² To say that God reveals himself in the events of history does not mean that every event--pleasant or unpleasant--reflects his will, but only that one must not rule out, on the basis of human categories of acceptability, the possibility that God is acting in such events.

³¹Joseph D. Ban, *Education for Change* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1968), p. 23.

³²Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 300.

God discloses himself not only in events, but also in interpersonal relationships. It is significant that the people of God are a "people of the Book," but more importantly they are a community of persons. Smart points out that "Jesus was not willing to set down his gospel in a book because, by its nature as a truth which is also life, the very life of God himself being given to man, the gospel had to be embodied in persons, and witness had to be borne to it by persons, if it was to be heard and understood."³³ Revelation is not an abstract body of truth, but by its very nature constitutes a relationship of persons, a divine-human meeting. The content of revelation, therefore, is not communicated through the cold impartation of facts, but through what Reuel Howe calls "dialogue": the " . . . kind of meeting between man and man which cannot occur without an implicit meeting between man and God."³⁴ As Sherrill puts it, " . . . the normal scene of revelation is the scene where fellowship exists."³⁵

If revelation calls a community into being, new light is shed on the affirmation that God is disclosed in history. It now becomes "*our* history,"³⁶ a particular history, a heritage which is claimed by a people who are conscious of their relation to God. Thus revelation, while rooted in past events, becomes God's here-and-now speaking to

³³Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

³⁴Reuel L. Howe, *The Miracle of Dialogue* (New York: Seabury Press, 1962), p. 105.

³⁵Sherrill, *op. cit.*, p. 78. (Original in italics.)

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 74.

the community of faith even as the community recalls its past.

The Bible as expressive of this history comes immediately to mind, but the Christian heritage is not limited to the Bible. The history of the people of God encompasses the whole of history, past, present, and future; therefore the attitude which would restrict revelation to the Bible is itself a most un-biblical attitude. Church history, extending from the earliest church to the experiences of a particular worshipping community in the present moment, is to be understood as on a continuum with biblical history.

God's address is not limited to the Bible; yet the uniqueness of the Bible is such that without it, the rest of history is incomprehensible. That is the Christian claim. According to the United Presbyterian "Confession of 1967," "The Scriptures are not a witness among others, but the witness without parallel."³⁷ James Smart expresses the same point this way:

. . . The revelation of God in the Scriptures is unique; it is not one among many revelations of God which are to be set in line with each other and weighed and compared. God speaks to man through the Scriptures a word of judgment and mercy which, if it is not heard in this place, is not heard at all.³⁸

The Bible is a book about God, and more particularly about the divine-human encounter, but it is not primarily a "religious" book. It chronicles not the quest of man for God, nor the efforts of man to

³⁷"The Confession of 1967," in *The Constitution of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1967), Part I, par. 9.27.

³⁸Smart, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-18.

understand God, but witnesses to God's giving of himself.³⁹ In the Bible, the people of God are not obliged to create the conditions under which God will make himself known, but it is God who first draws near. Not man, but God, is central, and herein is the uniqueness of the Bible:

. . . *He* it is of whom the Bible speaks. And is He spoken of elsewhere? Certainly. But whereas elsewhere consideration of him is left to the last, an imposing background, an esoteric secret, and therefore only a possibility, in the Bible he is the first consideration, the foreground, the revelation, the one all-dominating theme.⁴⁰

God is not merely the "theme" of the Bible, however--the Bible is not simply a book *about* God. In the community of those who have responded to God, it is confessed that God himself is speaking through the words of Scripture and in the events of which it tells. This speaking is not to be understood in a mechanical sense, as if God "wrote" the Bible, but in the sense that God chose the fragile words of men to bear the enduring message of his self-disclosure. The Bible is the primary, normative setting for the address of God. God is speaking. This affirmation is just the opposite of the approach of some readers who believe that they can examine the Bible and discover God. In Iris Cully's words,

God confronts the reader in the pages of the Bible. This may be completely the reverse of the attitude with which some people approach the Bible. They look upon it as a book through which they hope to prove the existence of God. . . . While it

³⁹Reinhold Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁴⁰Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 74.

is true that God is the subject of the Bible, it is not true that he is an object being described and identified. Man is the one being described and identified.⁴¹

The proponents of the "new hermeneutic" are pointing in this direction when they say that " . . . the text interprets itself by what it has to say about us."⁴²

History, then, is not a simple catalogue of facts or a barren recitation of happenings. History is the placing of events within a framework of meaning. In the community which appropriates and celebrates a history whose meaning resides in the divine-human encounter, however, even more is affirmed: it is God who is speaking, here and now. The Christian heritage continues to re-present itself as God's address in the present life of the community. Records of past encounters between God and man must always be seen in relation to the present encounter. The heritage illumines present events and functions as a corrective for the interpretation of present experience; and on the other hand, present encounter between God and man validates the tradition and makes it contemporary. Tradition, therefore, must not be kept in the past. Violence is done to the meaning of the Christian heritage unless its witness to past events is perceived as God's address within a present encounter. The Christian heritage is thus a continuum, claimed and celebrated by a community whose history and whose present

⁴¹Iris V. Cully, *Imparting the Word* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 114-15.

⁴²James M. Robinson, "Hermeneutic Since Barth," in Robinson and Cobb, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

life are understood to be illumined and given life by the address of God.

The Word of God in Jesus Christ

The affirmation has been made that the Bible is the primary setting of, and the normative witness to, God's address. As Dana Prom Smith says, "The Bible arose out of the need to discern the voice of God amid the babble of false prophets."⁴³ Yet there is a problem: how is the community to approach the Scriptures? The Bible is not a handbook for Christian living; it contains, moreover, no explicit norms as to how events are to be interpreted or responded to. Suzanne de Dietrich writes, "The greatness of the Bible, but also its difficulty, lies in the fact that it does not present us with a ready-made set of principles or a philosophy of life which we merely apply but with a living God who acts in history and encounters men in concrete life situations."⁴⁴

When the address of God in the Bible is acknowledged, an approach to the problem is suggested, but the problem is not solved. The Bible is a difficult book: there are many passages in which the meaning is not clear, and God's address in the Bible is not always self-evident. Moreover, " . . . the Bible explicates no 'principle of

⁴³Dana Prom Smith, *The Educated Servant* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1967), p. 68.

⁴⁴Suzanne de Dietrich, *The Word with Power* (New York: Friendship Press, 1965), p. 5.

interpretation' and contains no 'doctrine of the Word of God'⁴⁵

Some Christians have sought an answer in the mutuality of Scripture and tradition. If the Bible and the heritage are a continuum, then perhaps what is not clear in one place will be made clear somewhere else. The use of tradition is necessary and, in fact, inevitable, but the danger is real that the Bible's claim to normativeness will thus be lost, and the community will be talking to itself rather than listening to God.

The Bible, of course, can make no *a priori* claim to be the normative setting for God's address.⁴⁶ The church's affirmation that the Bible is revelatory does not rest upon any self-evident authority within the Bible. It is the claim of faith, and as such it is not demonstrable except to faith. Such faith is not "faith in the Bible"--that would be idolatrous--but it is faith in the God who discloses himself there.

The Christian claim for the authority of Scripture rests ultimately upon the fulfillment of revelation in Jesus Christ. As Calvin wrote, " . . . if it shows forth Christ, it is the word of life. . . ."⁴⁷ Luther's words make the same point:

. . . In this all genuine holy books agree, that they all together preach and stress Christ. Moreover, the true touchstone of criticism is when we see whether they stress Christ

⁴⁵Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁴⁶Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 60.

⁴⁷John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I:ix.3, p. 95.

or not. What does not teach Christ is not apostolic, even if Peter or Paul teach it. Again, what preaches Christ would be apostolic even if Judas, Annas, Pilate, or Herod were to do it.⁴⁸

The Scriptures are not normative simply because they are Bible. For Christians, the "principle of interpretation" with which the Bible is approached is this: *the Bible is authoritative insofar as it witnesses to Jesus Christ*. This principle is not a simplistic demand that all authoritative passages name the name of Christ; rather, the Christian must approach both Testaments, listening " . . . for the voice that he can recognize as the voice of the same Lord whom he knows in Jesus Christ."⁴⁹

Perhaps it is here that we get the clue. Only in the light of the Christian affirmation that Jesus Christ is the true Word of God can we make any sense of the affirmation of 'the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God.' From the humanity, unity, and authority of God's Word in Jesus Christ, we gain insight into the reflected humanity, unity, and authority of Scripture.⁵⁰

In this confession that Jesus Christ is the Word of God comes the culmination of all that has been said above concerning the activity of God as "address," as "revelation," and as "Word." The action, speech and person of God are united, fulfilled, and decisively revealed in this Man of Galilee whom the church confesses to be its present Lord.

⁴⁸Martin Luther, *Sämtliche Werke* (Frankfurt a. main: von hender & Zimmer, 1854), LXIII, pp. 156-57; translated in Calvin, p. lvi, n. 52.

⁴⁹Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁵⁰John E. Burkhardt, *Understanding the Word of God* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1964), p. 30.

Thus the Bible is given its authority, the heritage of the community is re-presented anew as God's address, and the worshiping church is authenticated and given life, through God's ultimate giving of himself in Jesus Christ.

"But when all is said," as Sherrill points out, "this mystery of becoming in Christ Jesus what we were created to be cannot be captured in doctrinal phrases. It is witnessed to in the worshiping community."⁵¹ The Word of God in Jesus Christ cannot be apprehended in terms of abstract belief; this amazing message, which is both a meaning and a Person, can only be celebrated in the midst of that divine-human dialogue which is worship.

THE RESPONSE

In the foregoing pages the emphasis was made that although God's Word completes itself through an answering human word, his address preserves human freedom. Man is free, therefore, to reject the Word of God. While such a rejection may be regarded as a negative response, in the following discussion the word "response" will be limited to the positive response which, in Sherrill's words, ". . . is as simple as, and yet more complex than, the 'Yes' which we utter in the deepest moments of our human relationships. It is the 'Yes' of the human self to the divine Self who is disclosing himself."⁵²

⁵¹ Sherrill, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 86.

Since the activity of God has been related conceptually to language, one might expect that the human response might be described most appropriately in such terms as "hearing" or "understanding." Indeed, these are part of the response, but they are not the heart of it. Moreover, the response as a "Yes" is more than simple assent. Fundamentally it is the act of a responsible self involving the whole person in perceiving, choosing, and acting out the human "Yes" to God's address.

Man's response is active and free, but, as was pointed out earlier,⁵³ it is not independent. The many modes of responding--including beliefs, ethics, rituals, feelings, and actions--become demonic and enslaving when they are considered as means to approach God or to obtain his favor. The mark of true response is its recognition of God's gracious initiative.

. . . It is not we who go to God. It is God who comes to us. It is not we who find Jesus because he is not lost. Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save the lost, and so it is he who finds us. We do not make decisions for Christ. It is he who made the decision for us. . . .⁵⁴

The word of man, then, is not an address to God as if God had not said anything, but an answering word to his primal, gracious Word.

Like the divine address, the human response cannot be described or categorized with precision. The dynamics within the human person-ality which underlie response to God are involved in an area of mystery

⁵³See above, p. 28.

⁵⁴Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

for which symbolic language is most appropriate.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, it is possible to describe the character of the response in general terms. Such is the task of the remainder of this chapter.

The Character of the Response

Responding to God involves the human self in its totality. It is saying "Yes" to the relationship which God has made possible through his address. "The self-giving of God can be met only by the response of the whole man."⁵⁶ To isolate the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of response to God is misleading--in fact, the distinction between "doing" and "knowing" is unimportant. In the words of Charles R. Stinnette, Jr., "In the biblical mode, knowing involves the response of faith to the Word of God. Indeed, the knowledge of God is first of all the service of God--obedience-in-trust to his Word. . . ."⁵⁷ Indeed, responding to God--affirming and participating in the divine-human relationship--is the only mode of knowing God.

The relationship is one of sovereignty on the part of God and obedience on the part of the man who responds.⁵⁸ It is significant that Brunner defines *πίστις*, which is the New Testament word for faith, as *Vertrauensgehorsam*, or "obedience-in-trust,"⁵⁹ and that Stinnette

⁵⁵Sherrill, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

⁵⁶Cully, *The Dynamics of Christian Education*, p. 87.

⁵⁷Charles R. Stinnette, Jr., *Learning in Theological Perspective* (New York: Association Press, 1965), p. 22.

⁵⁸Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁵⁹Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

uses the same English expression in the passage quoted in the above paragraph. This understanding is far different from the expectation of some people that faith should be principally an affective experience. Faith may give rise to authentic emotions, but its primary character is one of trustful, active obedience.

Such obedience is not unwilling bondage, however, since it is motivated and empowered by God's giving of himself in love. The predominant character of an obedient Christian response, then, is an answering love, expressed not only to God but to one's neighbor. In the words of Gerald H. Slusser,

. . . A Christian commitment arises out of the knowledge that one has been accepted, indeed loved, by that final cause of all which we call God. . . . It is precisely the Christian who can dare to commit his life to the extension of the love of God and neighbor, knowing that there are no rules to tell him just what this commitment will finally mean.⁶⁰

There are no rules--there is no coercion--for the basis of Christian obedience is a dynamic relationship with God, whose power is love.

The fact that there are no rigid principles for Christian life, but a continuing relationship of address and response, calls for a peculiar kind of thinking on the part of Christians. Christian thinking is neither meditation nor entertaining random thoughts. It might be called "thinking through"--with a sense of direction, of purpose, of systematic-ness. Christian thinking as a response is theological: it interprets and chooses in the light of God's present address.

⁶⁰ Gerald H. Slusser, *A Dynamic Approach to Church Education* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1968), p. 28.

Christians, therefore, ought always to be asking the *theological* question, "What is God saying?" with the consciousness of God's active address within the events and relationships of life. Christian thinking, then, is not the same as thinking about "religious" subjects. As John R. Fry says, "the Christian community does not devote all of its thinking to the Bible and the Christian religion *because* of its faith. . . . It appropriates the promise of God. It identifies his peculiar godly mode of address."⁶¹

Finally, Christian life is characterized by celebration. The message of God's self-giving love--love which is not dependent upon man's futile efforts at self-justification--evokes a response of exuberant thanksgiving. This joyful response, of which all acts of love in the world are an outpouring, both integrates the life of an individual and draws him into a worshiping community.

The Christian life . . . is more than a solitary moment of justification or even a series of such moments which, when added together, result in sanctification. It is a life lived under the aspect of God's continuing action in history. It is a communal life which is transfigured as it celebrates the *Te Deum laudamus* upon every occasion. The Holy Spirit is the Mode of Christ's presence and power within such a community. . . .⁶²

The epitome of Christian response, then, is *worship*--that movement, empowered by the Holy Spirit, which is the celebration of the gospel of God's incarnate, ever-active, and ever-present Word.

⁶¹John R. Fry, *A Hard Look at Adult Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 112.

⁶²Stinnette, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

The Worshiping Church

God's address to mankind is directed to individuals in community.⁶³ Thus, Christians respond to God by affirming their relatedness and by gathering as community. This does not mean that God cannot, or does not, disclose himself to individuals, but that the worshiping community provides a context of meaning in which God's address to an individual is perceived and answered.

The Christian community is not simply a particular expression of the community of mankind. Certainly all people are the people of God, in the sense that God is the Father of all men; but the uniqueness of the Christian community consists in the fact that *this* community has in some measure responded to God in an answering "Yes." The church, then, is that people which has become conscious of being related to God through Jesus Christ. This consciousness establishes historical and ecumenical connections: the church becomes the worldwide fellowship of those people--past, present, and future--who have confessed their relatedness to God as he has disclosed himself in Christ.

The gathering of the church as community arises from more than a sense of being God's people, however; it is confessed to be a response to a summons. The original meaning of the New Testament word for "church," ἐκκλησία, was "an assembly of citizens summoned by the

⁶³Sara Little, *Learning Together in the Christian Fellowship* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1956), p. 21.

crier."⁶⁴ The church's consciousness of being summoned is its perception of the address of God. Therefore the church is not a "voluntary association," even though its members are there by free choice. The crucial factor is *God's* choice of *them*, and the church is called, constituted, and empowered by the Word of God.

Implied in the foregoing discussion is the conviction that the Christian community may or may not correspond to those institutions which are generally recognized as churches. Brunner points out that "*the New Testament knows nothing of a Church as institution*. In the New Testament 'Church' means only one thing: the people of God, the community of the holy, the elected, the gathering of believers. . . ."⁶⁵ In time, every "gathering of believers" has become institutionalized to one degree or another; yet it is clear that not every institution which bears the name "church" is an expression of the worshipping community. That institutions can, and often do, bear the marks of the worshipping church is a sign of the grace of God.

The church, as a setting for the divine-human dialogue, is both a divine and a human community. This "dual nature" of the church explains both the church's capacity for clear perception and response to God's Word, and its frequent distortions and rejections of that Word.

⁶⁴Cully, *The Dynamics of Christian Education*, p. 37.

⁶⁵Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

. . . Even the most able speech of the most living faith is a human work. And this means that the community can go astray in its proclamation of the Word of God, in its interpretation of the biblical testimony, and finally in its own faith. Instead of being helpful, it can be obstructive to God's cause in the world by an understanding that is partly or wholly wrong, by devious or warped thought, by silly or too subtle speech. Every day the community must pray that this may not happen, but it must also do its own share of earnest *work* toward this goal. This work is *theological work*.⁶⁶

Even though the church has this responsibility of "theological work," however, its final validity rests not on what the church does but on what God does. The uniqueness of the church is not that it is especially worthy or capable, but simply that God is continually addressing the church, and speaking through the church to the world.

The Christian community is thus in large measure " . . . the *world-facing* reality which is brought about by the Word of God proclaimed and heard."⁶⁷ God's redemptive activity is not ultimately for the church, but for the world. The church, then, is not the guardian of a sacred tradition, but the proclaimer of a living Word which is for all mankind. The church does not justify itself by its usefulness as a vehicle for God's address--that would be a denial of the gospel--it simply and gratefully confesses that God does use it; and the church seeks to be faithful to the proclaiming task to which it is called.

Even while it is acknowledged that the church has this task of

⁶⁶Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 33.

⁶⁷Gabriel Vahanian, Translator's Introduction to Karl Barth *The Faith of the Church* (New York: Living Age Books, 1958), p. 13.

proclaiming God's self-giving by speaking and acting out of God's love in the world, one must guard against claiming that task as the church's *raison d'être*. Active, missional proclamation is the outcome, but not the essence, of the church's being. The essence of the church is the divine-human dialogue which has its center in *worship*. This is not to say that witnessing to God's activity in the world--even to the extent of radical social involvement--is an unimportant side-issue; the church's mission, however, is faithful to the gospel only when it is unmistakably continuous with, and a product of, worship.

The distinctive act of the church is its response to God in worship. Here the church acknowledges its relatedness both to God and to the world; here the church awaits the fresh speaking of God to his people, both as the community's heritage is recalled and as the theological dimension of present experience is disclosed.

. . . Where such worship takes place, God is no longer distant but is present, and not just with his people, but *in* his people. They are a people who, in their response to God, have come to be indwelt by God. They are the two or three who, meeting together in the name of Jesus Christ, have the promise fulfilled that he himself will be in the midst of them, i.e., *in* them, making them a human body for himself in which he may dwell and through which he may speak and act.⁶⁸

Worship--the celebration of God's redeeming address--is the decisive mode of the church's responding, and it is worship which authenticates the Christian character of every other response.

⁶⁸Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

In the Light of the Gospel

The Christian style of life is not one of unconscious reaction to stimuli; it is one of *enlightened response* to God, consciously made.⁶⁹ The style of response has been discussed above; the answer to the remaining question has been suggested, but now must be made explicit. The question is, What is the source of enlightenment for Christian response to God?

The answer is simple, yet profound beyond telling: it is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is the guarantee that "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Jesus Christ."⁷⁰ One is not obliged to "live up" to the gospel. It is a given, dependent neither upon man's deserving nor even upon man's faith--except as such faith is itself a gift from God. The essence of the gospel, as Barth puts it, " . . . is not *fiducia*, though that is part of it: the essence of it is that it is *God's gift*."⁷¹

Christians claim that only this word can speak to man's predicament. In the midst of man's insecure pride, man's continual striving--and failing--to prove himself worthy of being loved, comes the painful certainty that man, as Howe expresses it, " . . . cannot hope to be the source of salvation. Nor can a religion help that commands 'Thou shalt do the impossible,' namely, live in perfect love and peace with God and man. . . . This kind of religion is bad

⁶⁹Slusser, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁷⁰Romans 8:1 (RSV).

⁷¹Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 263.

news. . . ."72 The good news, which is gospel, is "that the One who loves us, in the midst of our sin, who shares our life with us, who participates in history, and takes the burden of humanity upon himself."73

Enlightened by such a gospel, what else can the people of God do but first and always to worship--to respond to God's love with grateful celebration and ontagious joy, to confess the futility of their strivings and to revel in God's grace? Only here does the church lay hold of the power to do and to be what God calls it to do and be--when the Christian community knows itself as the worshiping church--the community of celebration.

⁷²Reuel L. Howe, *Man's Need and God's Action* (New York: Seabury Press, 1953), p. 8.

⁷³Thomas C. Oden, *Beyond Revolution* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), p. 49.

CHAPTER III

WORSHIP AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

George Albert Coe, a highly influential Christian educator writing in 1917, lamented that " . . . our workers do not discriminate with sufficient care either ends or means, do not *think* enough upon what they are about . . . ," and he warned that "our work is famishing, and our pupils are perishing, because we have not enough theory."¹ Since Coe's time, a vast library of theory has materialized, drawing upon theological as well as educational disciplines and enunciating both ends and means for the church's educational ministry.

The emergence of such an immense body of theory, seeking to be theologically responsible as well as educationally workable, has led to many exciting ventures in teaching and learning. Yet the work of theorists in Christian education has been a source of confusion as well as enlightenment. Ideas which have been propounded by some experts are found to be in conflict with other ideas espoused by other experts, and there is further conflict between these ideas and the practices which many teachers believe to be serviceable. Of course, there are always unusually insightful teachers and unusually productive teaching-learning environments which may contribute to education with integrity and meaning. However, unless some framework can be found

¹George Albert Coe, *A Social Theory of Religious Education* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), pp. 3-4.

in which theoretical confusion may be resolved and theoretical insights may be seen clearly to be fruitful at the local level, excellence in education will continue to be the exception rather than the rule for the church.

Lacking a unifying perspective from which to view the suggestions of the theorists, local church educators persist in pursuing vaguely-defined ends through unworkable means, or they react spasmodically to the current fashions of theoretical emphasis. For example, one day "content-centered" teaching is eagerly espoused, and the next day "person-centered" education is advocated with equal zeal. A stress on behavioral objectives is soon replaced by the conviction that "faith cannot be measured." A provocative book may ignite enthusiasm for education as the communication of the truths of the gospel, but that idea is soon repudiated in favor of equipping the church for mission. As the theoretical pendulum swings back and forth, the experts seem often to be talking exclusively to each other, and the poor teacher is left without a sense of direction. The typical church school either ignores current theory and remains safely isolated in the educational practice of a previous generation, or it vacillates amid confusion about what the experts are saying. The result is tragic. As James Smart has observed,

. . . A prominent columnist, when he wants to describe anything that is extremely fatuous, and the product of superficial thinking, calls it 'Sunday School stuff.' The disturbing thing is that his audience knows exactly what he means.²

²James D. Smart, *The Teaching Ministry of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 75.

There is now no shortage of theories. The great need now is not another round of arguments and counter-arguments, even though church education may well benefit from continuing theoretical discussion. Most urgently required at this moment is an all-encompassing frame of reference, a comprehensive *theological* orientation providing not only "handles" for the appropriation of theory, but criteria for the setting of goals and the choosing of methods. The organizing principle of such an orientation must be compelling and clearly understandable at the local level, and it must partake of the very nature of the gospel.

THE GOAL OF THE EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY

The appropriate context for Christian education is the divine-human dialogue which has its center in worship. Worship, then, is the organizing principle and the appropriate orientation for education in the church. The genius of worship is that it focuses at once on the address of God and on the response of man, giving to each its rightful place within a dynamic relationship encompassing the whole history of salvation--past, present, and future. Thus worship as the conceptual center for church education avoids the pitfall of "content-centering" with its tendency to locate the gospel in a static body of knowledge, as well as the trap of "learner-centering," which tends to treat man as if he were the addressor. With worship as its center, Christian education will affirm the dynamism of the divine-human encounter and acknowledge the two subjects of that encounter in their

proper relationship.

Worship is the center and the paradigm of the church's life, and as such it is the ground of the church's educational ministry. In the words of Richard L. Snyder, ". . . In this worship, in this unique 'meeting,' . . . the church discovers its need to learn and receives its authority to teach."³ If worship is not central, there will be little to ameliorate the confusion which now reigns regarding both ends and means in church education. But if the educational ministry belongs to a church which understands itself as a worshiping community, the whole life of that church--worship, fellowship, mission, teaching and learning--will be illumined and brought into focus within the continuum of the divine-human dialogue.

The goal of Christian education is to enable the learner's participation in the life of the worshiping church, and to equip him to make responses which are in essential continuity with worship. This, to use Slusser's phrase, is an "ability goal": it is "neither abstract nor content oriented."⁴ The ability to respond implies knowledge and skills—a degree of mastery of essential information together with the capacity to *use* knowledge and skills in concrete responses. Christian education is thus concerned with the development of background understandings and other interpretive tools as well as with the

³Richard L. Snyder, *Leadership Manual* (Boston: United Church Press, 1964), p. 2.

⁴Gerald H. Slusser, *A Dynamic Approach to Church Education* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1968), p. 30.

nurture of a fundamental theological stance.

This goal implies several related abilities.⁵ The first of these is the ability to understand and interpret the history of salvation as a setting for God's self-disclosure within the divine-human dialogue. Such history embraces the Bible as the normative witness and setting of God's address, and thus the ability to interpret the Bible is of paramount importance. Salvation history, however, extends from the biblical witness to the present experience of a community which is conscious of being addressed by God. Church education, therefore, is concerned not exclusively with the Bible but with church history, the development of Christian thought, and the present theological discussion as this heritage is appropriated by the learner in the community which claims it as "our heritage."

A second ability, which seems to be a corollary of the first, is the ability to comprehend the beliefs of the worshiping community. For those who confess the faith, the church intends to provide tools for responsible participation in the ongoing theological conversation as well as for a deepening understanding of their commitment and an enlightened, obedient response to God. For those who have not confessed the faith, this second ability involves at least a clear understanding of the claims and promises of God,⁶ and a grasp of the risks

⁵Cf. the "five essential abilities" in the United Presbyterian curriculum plan, *Christian Faith and Action*, listed in Locke E. Bowman, Jr., *Planning Teacher Education in the Parish* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1967), pp. 24-25.

⁶*Go and Teach* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1966), p. 11.

and implications of Christian commitment.

Third is the ability to share the common life of Christians, to participate constructively in the worshiping church. This implies not merely an understanding of the mechanics of liturgy or the structure of church organization, but an appreciation of the function of the church and the relation between its activities, with worship at the center. Also included is a recognition of the continuity of worship with the totality of life, and thus an appreciation of the presence of the church in the world.

Fourth is the ability to interpret human experience (history, events, situations, relationships, persons, things), especially one's own experience, in the light of God's address within the divine-human dialogue. This includes the realization that the totality of human life may be perceived as continuous with the history of salvation, and that there is no facet of experience which is not a potential setting for the encounter with God. When the theological dimension of all experience is grasped, the learner is equipped to make a response to God encompassing the whole of life.

This listing of abilities is not intended to be exhaustive, but suggestive of the kinds of skills and understandings needed by the individual in order to make an enlightened response to the address of God both within the worshiping community and in his life outside the gathered church. As specific objectives are formulated for particular teaching-learning events, insights such as those in the two preceding chapters--regarding the character of God's address and man's response

as well as the centrality of worship--will provide a controlling theological orientation. The suggestions of the educational theorists are to be evaluated in terms of their consistency and effectiveness in enabling responses continuous with worship.

Theological Implications

The ability to make such responses is not the same as making them. Equipping learners with interpretive tools and theological understandings does not guarantee that these tools and understandings will be used. In fact, the reality and pervasiveness of sin in human life means that there is no guarantee that the learner will even adequately grasp the tools which are necessary for response, regardless of the excellence of the teaching-learning situation. Since the abilities involved are not merely intellectual or technical, but have to do with the discernment of meanings and values, the fact of sin must be acknowledged in its capacity to distort learning. Even where conditions of learning are the best possible, there can be no glib optimism in the church's educational ministry.

Human beings, moreover, are free, responsible selves, not machines which can be programmed to make "automatonlike 'Christian' responses."⁷ The gospel affirms the freedom of the human self; in fact, freedom in the gospel is such that the attempt to condition learners to make automatic moral choices or predetermined theological affirmations is demonic. The message cannot be communicated by

⁷Slusser, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

coercion. In the words of Paul Tillich, "We are asking: How do we make the message heard and seen and then either rejected or accepted? The question *cannot* be: How do we communicate the gospel so that others will accept it? For this there is no method."⁸ Because of the facts of human sin and human freedom, Christian education must be both realistic and modest.⁹

There is a more profound reason, however, for affirming that an individual's response cannot be guaranteed even by the most nutritious educational program. As Barth puts it, "Where the Word of God is heard and proclaimed, something happens which in spite of all interpretive skill cannot be brought about by interpretive skill."¹⁰ The gospel is not a human formulation nor is it even a human discovery:

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel, for I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.¹¹

Christians confess that revelation is the doing of God. Moreover, only God can overcome human sin and enable an appropriate response; thus in every learner's life the capacity to respond in faith, as well

⁸Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 201.

⁹Roger Lincoln Shinn, *The Educational Mission of Our Church* (Boston: United Church Press, 1962), p. 23.

¹⁰Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 168.

¹¹Galatians 1:11-12 (RSV).

as the response itself, is God's gift. The church may provide a body of information, a battery of technical skills, a theological orientation, and a context of supporting relationships in which learning may take place, but both the church and the individual learner are finally and solely dependent on God who enables the faithful response. As Nels Ferré says, "In the end it is God who is Educator."¹² Thus the only hope of fulfillment of the goal of Christian education comes by the grace of God.

The church and its educational ministry, however, are also gifts from God. The message of the gospel, though dependent upon revelation, is communicated through persons. In Calvin's words, " . . . But as he did not entrust the ancient folk to angels but raised up teachers from the earth truly to perform the angelic office, so also today it is his will to teach us through human means."¹³ Calvin has elaborated on this point:

In our own day there has been great controversy over the efficacy of the ministry [of preaching and teaching]. Some exaggerate its dignity beyond measure. Others contend that what belongs to the Holy Spirit is wrongly transferred to mortal men--if we suppose that ministers and teachers penetrate into minds and hearts and so correct both blindness of mind and hardness of heart. . . .

The points in dispute on both sides will be readily and easily resolved by expressly noting (1) the passages in which God as the author of preaching [and teaching], joining his

¹²Nels F. S. Ferré, *A Theology for Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 171.

¹³John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), IV:i.4, p. 1017.

Spirit with it, promises benefits from it; (2) the passages in which God, separating himself from outward helps, claims for himself alone both the beginnings of faith and its entire course.¹⁴

God communicates his truth through human channels. The church's educational ministry, therefore, while it cannot cause anyone to believe or to respond in faith, may serve not only as a provider of tools and a witness to the truth, but as an effective setting and channel for God's address to a learner.

Consequently, the church, though it cannot guarantee revelation or compel a response, can so engage in the teaching ministry as to maximize the likelihood that the learner will comprehend the meaning of the gospel, embrace it, and respond to the address of God expressed within it. It may be, of course, that the church's educational efforts may *minimize* that likelihood: persons may be hindrances to the reception of revelation as well as effective vehicles. At any rate, however, an educational ministry which seeks to be responsible to its task will not be content with the simple presentation of information or the provision of tools. As Locke E. Bowman, Jr., expresses it, Christian education is " . . . undeniably hortative. That is, the church yearns over us. She voices an earnest hope that our lives will be personally affected, that we will take new directions, because of our participation in study. . . ."¹⁵ Church education, then, is not

¹⁴Calvin, *op. cit.*, IV:i.6, p. 1020.

¹⁵Locke E. Bowman, Jr., *Straight Talk About Teaching in Today's Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 33.

an impersonal channel, even though it depends on God's grace for its final effectiveness and God's address for its message; the church hopes to be a faithful servant of God's Word.

To say that Christian education is the work of God does not preclude the necessity of personal decision on the part of the individual learner. Even Horace Bushnell, famous for his insistence "that the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise,"¹⁶ did not intend to rule out personal decision. Bushnell was simply rejecting the assertion of some of his contemporaries that a child should grow up "in sin" and later be converted. To affirm the necessity of decision is not to call for a simplistic, emotional, "decision for Christ," but a confrontation with the address of God and the demand of the gospel for a personal "Yes" or "No." Such a decision is not usually once-and-for-all; an initial "No" may later be reconsidered, and an initial "Yes," if not later reversed, may lead to further explorations of its implications, further encounter with God, and further decision.

Implications for Educational Design and Method

The goal, once again, is to equip the learner to respond to God within worship and to make further responses in continuity with worship. One clear implication of this goal is that education in the church is not a preparation for some future time when the learner will

¹⁶Horace Bushnell, *Christian Nurture* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), p. 10; original in italics.

begin to make "Christian" responses, but a process of nurture within a present encounter with God. Christian education takes place within a worshiping community which acknowledges the present address of God and responds to him within the present moment. Since the church's very nature is that of a worshiping community, if learners are to be part of that community they must not be denied the opportunity to participate in the community's celebrations. The church has too often tragically ignored two very simple, basic requirements: that worship should be primarily celebrative event rather than somber observance, and that worship and education must be so scheduled that children, youth, and adults may participate in *both*. If worship is not a substitute for education, neither is education a substitute for worship. How often the church has cheated its members by scheduling both at the same hour!

The goal has several further implications for teaching method. In dealing with content, for example, education which centers in worship must witness to the dynamism of the divine-human relationship. The relationship is not based on propositional truths; therefore teaching must not be indoctrination, however subtle the means employed. It is beyond the scope of the present discussion to treat teaching method with any thoroughness, but an appropriate methodology is suggested by such terms as "inquiry" and "discovery,"¹⁷ wherein the

¹⁷Doris J. Hill, *Teaching* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1967), p. 162.

Learner participates in, and takes a large measure of responsibility for, the learning process. Teacher and learner both participate in the cooperative unfolding of the learning experience and its content. Such a methodology is consistent with centering in worship; it also reflects one of the most important insights of recent learning theory, that "learning is facilitated when the student participates responsibly in the learning process."¹⁸ This approach has the potential of enabling the learner not only to acquire information and form concepts, but simultaneously to develop the interpretive skills necessary for further exploration, discovery, and response.

The affirmation that the ability to respond in faith is a gift from God, as well as the conviction that the learner must participate responsibly in his own learning, means that there is a large area of unpredictability and freedom in Christian education. There are serious dangers in the currently popular practice of orienting education toward highly specific instructional objectives in which measurable behavior change is the crucial factor. Sherrill warns that

. . . the more specific the aims become, the more surely we are drawn into the business of trying to predetermine for others what their behavior and what their feelings should be; and then accordingly the more inevitably are we drawn into manipulating them to make this come true.¹⁹

Moreover, as Iris Cully points out, " . . . a person's relationship to

¹⁸Carl R. Rogers, *Freedom to Learn* (Columbus: Merrill, 1969), p. 162.

¹⁹Lewis Joseph Sherrill, *The Gift of Power* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 83.

God does not come within the bounds of human measurement."²⁰ Therefore, to assume that significant learning has taken place only when certain precise "behavioral objectives" are met is not only a denial of the freedom of the learner, but also a demonic attempt to codify and systematize the divine-human relationship. Learning then becomes more like "cramming for an exam" than dynamic participation in a dialogue.

All this is not to suggest that "behavioral objectives" are to be repudiated. Educators in all fields " . . . are beginning to understand that, unless behavior has changed, one has not really learned."²¹ Instructional objectives which are specific and measurable are helpful tools in planning, teaching, and evaluating. Such objectives are harmful, however, when their attainment is considered as the *end* of the teaching-learning process. It may be true that nothing of significance is learned unless behavior is changed, but that admission is not the same as saying that behavior change must be immediate, predictable, measurable, or controllable in order to be significant. Personal discovery of meaning and free decision must be affirmed and enabled by the church's teaching ministry.

Since the learner's responsible participation is crucial in this approach to education, teachers must be concerned with the nurture of positive attitudes toward learning. Learning, of course, at its

²⁰Iris V. Cully, *Children in the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 56.

²¹*Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming* (Washington: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1962), p. 199.

best, carries with it an excitement which is its own reward. Every student, however, brings his own expectations and previous experiences which will color his attitude toward present learning opportunities, and it is quite possible that his experience with the church's teaching efforts will reinforce negative attitudes as well as positive ones. A learner's attitude toward church education, moreover, is directed not only toward teachers or methods or learning environments, but toward the subject matter, the content and meaning of what is taught. Robert F. Mager says, "Sometimes we teach the beauty and importance of a subject as well as the substance of it. Sometimes, though, we teach people to dislike, and then to avoid, the very subject we are teaching them about."²² With reference to the teaching of the gospel, Phoebe M. Anderson makes this point concisely: "How a person learns about Christianity makes Christianity true or not true for him."²³

This is an area in which the concept of behavioral objectives may be of significant help. Mager suggests that a learner's attitude toward a certain subject can be inferred by observing patterns of behavior related to that subject.

Suppose we talk about behavior instead of 'attitude.'
 . . . By limiting ourselves to behavior, we skirt the nebulous realm of 'reallys'--whether a student 'really' has this kind of attitude or that kind of attitude. In behavior, we have something concrete; we are dealing with responses. We can

²²Robert F. Mager, *Developing Attitude Toward Learning* (Palo Alto, California: Fearon, 1968), p. vi.

²³Phoebe M. Anderson, *Living and Learning in the Church School* (Boston: United Church Press, 1965), p. 40; original in italics.

concentrate on increasing the incidence of 'moving toward,' or *approach* responses, and reducing the incidence of 'moving away from,' or *avoidance* responses. We can not only aim for an objective and act to achieve it, but we can *evaluate our success in achieving the objective*.²⁴

Again, a word of caution must be voiced, inasmuch as this method involves an inference from observable behavior about something which is not observable, and thus in many cases it may be totally misleading. Used with caution as to its limitations, however, this approach may be an important evaluative tool, and consequent adjustments in educational program may result in more effective, more permanent, and more enjoyable learning.

A further implication of the goal of Christian education is the inclusiveness of subject matter. The church is, of course, concerned that learners should be able to interpret the Bible and that they should have a grasp of the history and beliefs of the worshiping community. These are indispensable learnings. However, because the Christian faith affirms that God is active in all of life, because the impact of mass communications has made learners aware of the global implications of historical events, and because the Christian needs to be equipped to respond to God in the world as well as in the church, no subject matter may be considered "off limits" for church education. Learning in the church is not study about "Christian" subjects, but looking at human experience from a perspective informed by God's address.

²⁴Mager, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

If Christian education is to equip the learner for responses, in the church and in the world, which are continuous with worship, then the church's educational ministry must itself be consistent with worship. It must be corporate in the deepest sense, not only as teachers and learners undertake a corporate seeking after truth and meaning, but as the church itself is a network of relationships within which individual discovery and decision is supported and nurtured. Moreover, church education must foster an activist stance--not so that learners may justify themselves by engaging in meritorious service, but so that an inclusive response may be made to the redemptive activity of God in the light of the gospel.

Finally, the life-style of Christian education must be celebrative. God's self-giving love comes to man in a way that addresses his deepest need, redeems him from his most profound predicament, and frees him for his greatest fulfillment. The content of Christian education, then, is uniquely *something to celebrate*. Christian teaching-and-learning is finally enabled because the church has been enabled to respond to God's love in grateful jubilee.

EQUIPPING FOR RESPONSE

Some churchmen are fond of speaking about worship, fellowship, service, and education as the church's primary ways of being and doing. These are often treated as exclusive categories, in which case this way of speaking ought to be rejected. However, if these modes of being the church are considered to be emphases within an inclusive

whole, the insights gained from focusing on such emphases may be helpful.

The task of the remainder of this chapter is to relate the overall goal of Christian education to the modes of responding to God in worship, fellowship, and service. The peculiar character of these modes of being may be suggested by the terms which will be used in the following pages to describe them: celebration, life-sharing, and mission.

Celebration

The character of worship has been described in some detail in earlier chapters. The term "celebration," however, evokes meanings which have particular relevance for worship at this moment in history. Christian education must provide learners with understandings and tools to equip them for participation in the celebrating community.

Celebration is theological. The content and order of celebration are determined not by some hedonistic criterion of enjoyment, but by what God has done and is doing. Worship is not the attempt of man to draw near to God, but a joyful response to God who has given himself to man. Celebration thus begins with grace, and the community's consciousness of a grace-filled relationship with God. The community is able to celebrate because God is Host and Chief Celebrant.

Christian education must ever be attentive to the theological basis of celebration. As Hunter says, the church's educational ministry " . . . must find its focus in what God is doing, and the

Church's task is one of enabling man to respond to what God is doing."²⁵
 The learner must be equipped to interpret experience theologically,
 and the style of that equipping is what Ross Snyder calls "celebrative
 theologizing":

Celebration theology is essentially a meanings theology. The very purpose of celebration is not to inculcate a particular dogma in verbal form, but to awaken and let burgeon the meaning which will form the speaking word . . . in whatever situation the celebrants find themselves. . . .

Therefore we are always concerned to get people phenomenologizing event and lived moment, rather than imprinting them with our conclusions. We invite them to come through the journey toward symbolized meaning which we have taken.²⁶

The learner-celebrant is able to reflect on his own experience, to voice tentative theological gropings, to express strongly-held convictions, and to search for and try out the words and symbols which speak the meaning of his life,²⁷ because he has first been affirmed by God. He is therefore able to celebrate in the midst of reflection and search.

Celebration is based upon a "convivial theology," in the words of Dana Prom Smith.²⁸ Worship is a festive event--it is so because of the gospel. As William Tyndale wrote in his preface to his New Testament translation of 1525:

²⁵David R. Hunter, *Christian Education as Engagement* (New York: Seabury Press, 1963), p. 31.

²⁶Ross Snyder, *Contemporary Celebration* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 106-7.

²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 107-9.

²⁸Dana Prom Smith, *The Convivial Company* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), p. 14.

Euāgeliō (that we call gospel) is a greke worde, and signyfyth good, mery, glad and joyfull tydings, that maketh a mannes hert glad, and maketh hym synge, daunce and leepe for ioie.²⁹

Worship is a time of joy. "It is not a transfixed stare on the holy,"³⁰ but high festival, characterized not by solemnity but by delight.

It is distressing indeed that the present-day church has so often lost sight of the festive character of worship. The near-banishment of laughter and noisy exuberance has reinforced a somber, tragic view of life which so many church members equate with the gospel. A primary concern of church educators, therefore, must be the restatement of the Good News in such a way that the whole church is enabled to celebrate, for celebrative worship is the foundation of the teaching ministry.

. . . A genuinely celebrating community is the context for education, for the celebration provides the reason for educating. If there is nothing to celebrate, there is not much reason to learn. The contagion of celebration provides the stuff of leading people forth into an understanding of themselves in the light of that which is celebrated.³¹

The teaching-and-learning venture in the church ought to be predominantly festal, even jubilant, in tone. This is not to say that the church ought to give up its serious educational enterprise in order to have a party; celebrative worship requires an understanding

²⁹William Tyndale, quoted by Joseph C. McLelland in *The Clown and the Crocodile* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1970), p. 99.

³⁰Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 83.

of its theological orientation and a grasp of what is being celebrated. But when education becomes gravely serious about itself, it is in danger of thwarting significant learning and stifling the exuberance which comes from encounter with the gospel. The deadly-serious approach to church education, moreover, denies the gospel in its assumption that one must be taught something in order to be saved. The central fact of the Christian faith is God's gift to man; church education which is faithful to that fact will encourage a celebrative teaching-and-learning style.

A persistent bugbear in the church is the insistence that everything must serve utilitarian ends. Worship, however, is not utilitarian. Worship is not problem-solving: as Snyder puts it, the church does not celebrate " . . . because we need to defend ourselves or to release glandular tensions. . . ,"³² but because God has given everything that is needful, even himself. The church ought vigorously to resist the influence of those who " . . . try to impose utility on worship by asking the question: 'What good is this accomplishing?'"³³

Worship is obedient service (λειτουργία), but it is not self-justifying or utilitarian service. It does not "help God," nor does it cause God to dispose himself favorably to man. It is a joyful, thankful response, and as such it has more affinity with play than it does with labor.³⁴ Indeed, in celebrative worship lies the appropriate

³²Ross Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³³Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

³⁴McLelland, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

union of work and play, for here it is acknowledged that a man's response need no other justification than that which God gives it.

Drama and dance--particularly in their ancient, more expressive meanings--are also closely akin to worship. Joseph C. McLelland laments that "one of the supreme ironies of our history is that the Christian church has so far departed from its dancing heritage that sacred dance occurs today only on the periphery of experimental worship."³⁵ With respect to drama, comedy comes closest to symbolizing the gospel--the ridiculous predicament of man, the nonrational character of reality, and the conviction that life is worth celebrating despite its absurdities.³⁶ Drama and dance, therefore, are not only art forms to be employed in celebration. Along with play, drama and dance share profound identities with worship, and as such they may yield significant meanings for a worshiping community.

Education in the church must aim at freeing persons from the utilitarian conception of life. In Western society, where even God is judged by his usefulness, utilitarianism is not easily discarded. A joyful acknowledgement of the graciousness of God, along with a vigorous rejection of self-justification, will help learners to appropriate the motifs of dance, drama, and play, and to penetrate the Christian understanding of existence.

Celebration is contemporary. This is not the case simply because of the innovative styles and expressions in worship which are

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 72.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 82-84.

emerging. Contemporary worship means that the community is celebrating life that is *now happening*. Snyder urges,

. . . Don't wait until all is safely dead to celebrate. Such as a church awaiting its hundredth anniversary to celebrate its distinctive life--all the ways of confining celebration to victories long past, rather than doing it in the *midst* of present struggles and exaltation. We can enjoy and glorify now.³⁷

Worship is the celebrative response to God's activity in the present life of the community.

The contemporary character of celebration, however, does not mean ignorance or repudiation of the significant past, nor is the genuinely celebrating community closed to the hopeful future. Contemporaneity does not mean isolating a community at the precise "now" moment of time; God addresses the community in such a way as to telescope time into " . . . a distinctive *Gestalt* of future-past-present."³⁸ The Christian community celebrates God's activity as taking place within a story--a story in which heritage and future join present experience and are appropriated by the community as "our story." Although, as Snyder says, " . . . in a celebration there is no point in dealing with experience in which those present were not involved,"³⁹ the future-past-present story of salvation is perceived as God's present address within a continuing encounter. In *this* story, the celebrants *are* involved.

³⁷Ross Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 150.

The community's affirmation of the contemporaneity of history has some clear implications for the educational treatment of the Christian heritage. The heritage is not significant because of the information which it contains; it is significant because it discloses the present speaking of God.

The Bible is the foundational and normative setting for God's address. The study of the Bible has always been a principal concern of the church's educational enterprise. Recent biblical scholars, however, have rediscovered the intimate relationship between the Bible and worship. Sherrill points out that " . . . a certain number of books, which we now know as the books of the Bible, were chosen as 'canonical,' that is, suited for reading aloud in the worshiping community as uttering the Word of God. . . ." ⁴⁰ Thus the interpretive stance appropriate for the study of the Bible is not scholarly detachment, but proclamation within worship, the re-presentation of Scripture as God's address to his people in the present. ⁴¹ Sherrill observes,

. . . In the Christian community as a *worshiping* community the encounter with God, to which the Bible testifies, goes not constantly in the present. . . .

On the negative side this means that teaching the Bible in a scene outside the Christian community, or teaching it anywhere in separation from worship, is an undertaking attended by heavy handicaps. When the Bible is lifted out of its relation to the worshipful encounter, it easily becomes a lifeless thing. . . . ⁴²

⁴⁰Sherrill, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁴¹Ernst Fuchs, "The New Testament and the Hermeneutical Problem," in James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr. (eds.), *The New Hermeneutic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 141-42.

⁴²Sherrill, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

Attention must be given to the character of the Bible as literature as well as a medium of revelation, but these two facets of the Bible must never be separated. As a human document, the Bible is primarily a confession of faith, not a scientific, scholarly historical treatise. It contains many kinds of writing, including narrative, poetry, myth, and liturgical expressions. Moreover, it is an ancient body of literature, presenting difficult problems of textual accuracy, cultural barriers, and forms of thought. Teachers and learners need to avail themselves of the tools, as well as the results, of the historical-critical study of the Bible. They need to become familiar with the overall structure of the Bible as well as the character of individual books and passages.

Particularly important in this respect is an understanding of the function and intentionality of myth as a form of language. There is a lingering tendency on the part of some teachers to insist upon the literal truth of mythical statements. Other teachers, perhaps embarrassed by the boldness of myth's apparent conflict with contemporary views of the world, tend to ignore the most embarrassing passages. In both cases, perceptive students are almost inevitably led to the conclusion that all myths are false. Myth, however, is indispensable. It expresses a view of life which is often inexpressible in any other way.

. . . Myth involves risk, because it offers engagement and struggle. In an age of mastery and manipulation like ours it is not surprising that we lack the verve for the

horizon of myth. As a defense mechanism we dismiss it to the rank of 'primitive world-view' and proceed to state: the meaning is nothing but . . .⁴³

Myth defies such reasonable explanation, for it does not treat life as an object to be analyzed and labeled, but remains " . . . faithful to the mystery of things. . . ."⁴⁴ The educator's responsibility relating to myth, then, is not a matter of taking it literally ("It should be obvious that we don't have to believe that the world is a giant tent in order to believe the good news of the Kingdom of God"⁴⁵), but of taking it seriously on its own terms.

Responsible study of the Bible, however, does not end with a grasp of its character as literature. As Barth says, "Intelligent and fruitful discussion of the Bible begins when the judgment as to its human, its historical and psychological character has been made and put behind us."⁴⁶ In another of his writings, Barth has said,

What these texts express can no doubt be objectively perceived, much like the content of all other texts in world literature. But to be *understood* in their own sense, the biblical texts call for either the No of unbelief or the Yes of faith. . . . The science of biblical theology does not work in empty space but in the service of the community of Jesus Christ, which is founded by prophetic and apostolic testimony. It is precisely this reason that it approaches these texts with a specific expectation. . . .⁴⁷

⁴³McLelland, *op. cit.*, p. 64; closing ellipsis in original.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁴⁵Dana Prom Smith, *The Educated Servant* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1967) p. 12.

⁴⁶Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), pp. 60-61.

⁴⁷Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1964), pp. 156-57.

The expectation is that God is speaking and will speak. This insight, too long absent in much of biblical scholarship, must be the controlling principle in the teaching and learning of the Bible. God is speaking: understanding requires a response to that address.

Responsible study of the Bible equips the learner for participation in celebrative worship. Acknowledgement of the unique character of the Bible as both a human document and the normative setting for God's address requires the obliteration of the distinction between "critical" and "devotional" study of the Scriptures.⁴⁸ Most importantly it is not finally the reader who addresses and interprets the text, but God who addresses and interprets the reader through the text. In the words of John B. Cobb:

. . . What is interpreted is ultimately and decisively the existence of the hearer of the proclamation. The text, rather than being the object of interpretation . . . , becomes an aid in the interpretation of existence. . . .⁴⁹

As Fuchs says, " . . . *the truth has ourselves as its object.*"⁵⁰ Educational use of the Bible which fails to take this insight into account will ultimately fail to get at the meaning of the Bible. Only when it is expected that God is speaking and will speak, will the learner be able to participate in celebration which is at once biblically-based and contemporary.

⁴⁸John Frederick Jansen, *Exercises in Interpreting Scripture* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1968), p. 22.

⁴⁹John B. Cobb, Jr., "Faith and Culture," in Robinson and Cobb, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-230.

⁵⁰Fuchs, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

Because the God who is speaking in the Bible is the same God who is speaking in the present, "the Bible itself," in the words of John R. Fry, "drives Christian education out of Bible study."⁵¹ The Christian heritage is not an isolated past, but an ever-present story. The history of salvation, while rooted in the Bible, extends from biblical events to the present celebrative existence of a particular community. The same "hermeneutical principle"⁵² which informs the educational approach to the Bible must also guide the teaching-and-learning of church history, the history of Christian thought, and the peculiar history of a specific community up to the moment which is happening now. God is speaking: the events interpret themselves by interpreting the learner and the community.

If the address of God comes in the future-past-present of a now-celebrating church, then the experience of celebration is itself part of the history of salvation. Therefore Christian education appropriately includes equipping for celebration. Ross Snyder says,

. . . The time has come to develop the art-science of constructing contemporary celebrations. To lay out with considerable fullness the working capital we need if we are to develop significant communal celebration. And teach many people the forming theories and skills so that more people can get in on the act.⁵³

The "forming theories and skills" include those related to the study

⁵¹John R. Fry, *A Hard Look at Adult Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 108.

⁵²James M. Robinson, "Hermeneutic Since Barth," in Robinson and Cobb, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54.

⁵³Ross Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

of the Bible and church history, but they also include the ability to interpret the language, style, and form of worship. Traditional liturgical language may need a degree of logical analysis,⁵⁴ but the learner needs also to acquire a "feel" for the flow of celebration and the relation of one movement of worship to the next, and he needs to be able to appropriate his own role as celebrant-in-community.

Two things remain in this discussion of celebration: the profound corporateness of the worshiping church, and the relation of worship to events and responses in the world. Although these two themes will be developed under the rubrics of "life sharing" and "mission," it must be kept in mind that the following is a continuation of the attempt to penetrate the meaning of celebration.

Life-Sharing

The goal of Christian education has been described as helping persons move toward making responses to God in continuity with worship. It is possible to express some of the implications of this goal in individualistic terms, but Christian education must ever be conscious of the corporate, relational character of human life. Human beings are related to one another both in sin and in redemption. As Coe says, "I cannot go alone either toward or away from the kingdom, for it is my relation to some one else, a relation of help or hinderance [sic] that determines the direction that my own character is taking."⁵⁵

⁵⁴Randolph Crump Miller, *The Language Gap and God* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970), p. 90.

⁵⁵Coe, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Worship does not take place among isolated individuals, even if those individuals happen to be located alongside one another. The basis of celebration is community, relatedness. Snyder says, "The ground of all celebration is a circle of people who believe in one another and in something together."⁵⁶ Christians affirm that their relatedness as a community is the gift of God: they gather as community in response to God. Corporateness is not something that is demanded or manufactured, but received and exulted in. In Bonhoeffer's words,

Because God has already laid the foundation of our fellowship, because God has bound us together in one body with other Christians in Jesus Christ, long before we entered into common life with them, we enter into that common life not as demanders but as thankful recipients.⁵⁷

In the community's celebrative response, which is worship, Christians become members of one another. They become a People. Their "membership" is what the New Testament calls *κοινωνία*--life-sharing at the deepest level--community which is enabled by relatedness to God. *Κοινωνία* is not a pleasant camaraderie concocted by church officials in order to make the "serious business" of the church more palatable; nor is it the submergence of the individual in some great cause. *Κοινωνία* is of the essence of the divine-human dialogue: because God has shared his life with man, life-sharing is enabled in

⁵⁶Ross Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 36; format altered.

⁵⁷Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), p. 28.

the community.⁵⁸ The selfhood of the individual is affirmed--the meaning of selfhood is disclosed--as the individual is "birthed" and "membered"⁵⁹ into a community. Because the community is God's gift and because God dwells in the community, the primary mode of relationship is not the continual attempt to prove one's worthiness, but celebration. Κοινωνία centers in worship.

Christian education is nurturing into the life of a celebrating people. There must be an active concern for what Howe calls "the language of relationship."⁶⁰ Relationships are crucial to the nurture and becoming of persons. Sherrill's words on this subject have often been quoted: *"The self is formed in its relationships with others. If it becomes de-formed, it becomes so in its relationships. If it is re-formed or trans-formed, that too will be in its relationships."*⁶¹

The church's educational ministry is concerned with a redemptive quality in its relationships, a quality which facilitates learning and encourages personal becoming. Learning theorists have emphasized that shared responsibility for learning, in an atmosphere of openness wherein both teachers and learners are able to be present to one another as genuine selves rather than hiding behind masks or

⁵⁸J. C. Hay, *Koinonia in the New Testament* (n.p.: Stewardship Committee, Canadian Council of Churches, n.d.), p. 1.

⁵⁹Ross Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁶⁰Reuel L. Howe, *The Miracle of Dialogue* (New York: Seabury Press, 1962), p. 137.

⁶¹Sherrill, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

contrived roles, learning is facilitated.⁶² Learning and becoming are further enabled when persons can feel that what they are is accepted--their feelings, their unique ways of discovery and functioning in a group, their right to grope and stumble and make mistakes. Acceptance of persons leads to an atmosphere of freedom--it is a risky atmosphere, for it permits the unpredictability of being human--but it is the only atmosphere in which persons can become *fully* human.

A fruitful teaching-learning relationship calls for more, however, than acceptance, trust, and freedom. There must be a relationship of empathy, genuine caring, cherishing of persons. The teacher must not be a benevolent manipulator, dispensing warmth from a safe distance. Redemptive relating implies what Snyder calls "intersubjectivity"⁶³--a mutual indwelling in which persons become available, permeable to each other, in such a way as to affirm the essential uniqueness of individual selfhood.

I have a hunch that you are never able to become a person until someone takes you into himself. . . . We have this strange power of birthing one another by taking one another into our consciousness and awareness. And so acting and talking that the other is aware that they live in us. . . .⁶⁴

It was pointed out earlier⁶⁵ that one of the "abilities" related to the goal of Christian education was that of interpreting

⁶²Rogers, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-7.

⁶³Ross Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁶⁵See above, p. 63.

experience theologically. With respect to the life-sharing quality of the Christian community, it would seem that the ability is best translated into interpreting *persons* theologically. As the learner is cherished by teachers and others in the worshiping community, he begins to grasp the conviction that persons are to be treasured, enjoyed, and loved, and that in such love is the activity of God. Even Carl Rogers, who is not known for his conscious theologizing, points to this cosmic dimension of intersubjectivity:

. . . When I really hear someone it is like listening to the music of the spheres, because beyond the immediate message of the person . . . there is the universal, the general. Hidden in all of the personal communications which I really hear there seem to be . . . aspects of the awesome order which we find in the universe as a whole. So there is both the satisfaction of hearing this particular person and also the satisfaction of feeling oneself in some sort of touch with what is universally true.⁶⁶

Christian education, then, is concerned about fruitful relationships not simply because they facilitate learning in a general sense, but because Christians believe that in such relationships God is speaking and acting, and genuine humanness is disclosed. Relationship is thus hermeneutical event: personal existence is interpreted, the gospel is made accessible, as God communicates himself through persons. Within the community which celebrates the presence and power of God, Christian educators seek to be "dialogical persons" with the expectation that the Word of God will be spoken through them.

. . . When we are truly known by another we are known by God, and to be truly loved by another is to know the love of God. . . . A spirit pervades and directs the

⁶⁶Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

'conversation,' and from this spirit, which Christians believe was fully incarnate in Christ, come the fruits of the Spirit. . . .⁶⁷

Through the gracious self-giving in which God communicates himself, *κοινωνία* becomes a redemptive mode of being-in-the-world. The worshipping church, constituted by the address of God in the act of celebration, witnesses to that Word by the quality and depth of the common life that God has given it.

Mission

The life of the Christian begins with the gospel. It does not begin with a search for God or a proof of worthiness, but with grace. In Bonhoeffer's words, "First, the Christian is the man who no longer seeks his salvation, his deliverance, his justification in himself, but in Jesus Christ alone."⁶⁸ The church is the fellowship of those who affirm and rejoice in the gospel and who celebrate their common life in Jesus Christ. The church " . . . needs no other justification than what has been given it in Jesus Christ."⁶⁹

The whole life of the church, including its mission, is rooted in celebration. The motif of church life is not somber reflection on the miseries of the world, but rejoicing in the love of God which can transform the world. Celebration takes in the full range of existence, the signs of death as well as the signs of life, and sees them in the

⁶⁷ Howe, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-6.

⁶⁸ Bonhoeffer, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22.

⁶⁹ Smith, *The Convivial Company*, p. 14.

light of God's redeeming love. Mission is not the church's program of proving itself through good deeds, but " . . . unbidden labor freely and creatively performed by Christians, as a practical expression of the new being which has sprung to life in them because they are united to Christ."⁷⁰ Mission is grounded in worship.

A commonly-used ecclesiastical phrase is "the church is mission." The inference is that mission is the church's *raison d'être*, the primary article of its identity, on the basis of which the church is to be judged. If that is what "the church is mission" means, it is a demonic slogan and a denial of the gospel, a source of both misunderstanding and malaise.⁷¹ If the church is to be judged on the basis of its efficacy in bringing about personal conversion or social change--in other words, if the church must justify itself on utilitarian grounds--then it can never be the church of Jesus Christ. The idea that "the church is mission," according to Dana Prom Smith, encourages a "corporate Pelagianism":

It assumes that a man's worthiness is precarious, and that through his own effort one must prove and improve his standing. It also assumes that through strenuous effort and hard work one can make the grade. Many people mistake this for the gospel of Jesus Christ, but it is, in fact, a denial of that gospel which begins with the assumption that a man has been declared worthy in Jesus Christ and needs no longer to prove himself to either God or man. . . .⁷²

⁷⁰Bernard C. Ikeler and Stanley J. Rowland, Jr., *Mission as Decision* (New York: Friendship Press, 1965), p. 6.

⁷¹For a sympathetic critique of this phrase, see George W. Webber, *The Congregation in Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 67.

⁷²Smith, *The Convivial Company*, p. 7.

Smith maintains, further, that when the church defines itself as mission, it fosters a "parasitical dependency,"⁷³ wherein the church feeds off the sorrow and suffering of mankind for its own definition. Moreover, since the church is a body of sinful, finite human beings and thus can never prove itself worthy by engaging in good works, the motivating force of mission becomes not joy, but guilt. As with all schemes of works-righteousness, the insistence that the church must justify itself by mission is finally enslaving and self-defeating.

The church is not mission. Its *raison d'être* is joyful celebration of the gospel, and mission is one of the results of that celebration. If the church is to regain an appropriate sense of mission, it may find a model in the record of the Pentecost event found in the book of Acts--an event which Smith calls " . . . the first great post-ascension celebration":

. . . The convivial company of the faithful became so hilarious that they were accused of being drunk of cheap wine at midday. That celebration issued in the first great effort on the part of the church to reach beyond itself. The mission was not a leftover, but an outpouring. The difference was that it was a product of joy, not guilt.⁷⁴

Mission is an outpouring of celebration. Only when worship is central will mission be vital.

To say that mission is an outpouring of celebration and not the essence of the church is not the same as saying that mission is not crucially important. Mission is a *necessary* and *inevitable*

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

outpouring of celebration. There is an appropriate place for the church to ask itself, "What good are we doing?"--provided that question is not asked in a context of self-justification. When the question is asked appropriately, it is not a matter of justification, but of validation. It is not that worship *ought to* issue in mission, but that it *does*. If celebration does not lead to active, responsible, self-giving, obedience-to-God in mission, then it is not worship but hedonistic group self-indulgence: it may be thrilling, but it comes to nothing. On the other hand, if mission is not continuous with the joyful response to God which is first made in worship, it is not mission but self-justifying do-goodism. Mission and worship validate each other, but the essence of the matter is worship.

Mission, then, is something quite other than focusing on the ills of the world and trying to decide what can be done. It is a continuation of the response to God's grace which began in worship. It is the divine-human dialogue continued in the world. Barth asks the rhetorical question, "What can the Christian in society do but follow attentively what is done by *God*?"⁷⁵ Christians face the world because God is active in the world. Mission is not a matter of "letting the world write the agenda," but of responding faithfully to God--letting God's action in the world write the agenda, set the pace, and determine the pattern and character of mission.

The life-style of mission is joy, not guilt. The impetus of

⁷⁵Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, p. 327.

mission is not the misery of the world, but the grace of God. The worshiping church does not avoid or deny suffering, but it takes up the "human cries"⁷⁶ of the world in an affirmative response to God's self-giving. The adversary of mission is not simply evil and injustice, but the world's self-righteous striving and utilitarian standards of personal worth:

The real tension is between the goodness and righteousness of men, and the graciousness of God in Christ. That is where the battle is joined. . . . The world believes in work. The gospel is play. The world strives to prove itself. The church enjoys the proof already given. The church celebrates what the world tries to achieve. Without that there is no mission. . . .⁷⁷

The relation of celebration to mission, then, is not one of a comfortable oasis or a brief respite in the midst of battle. Rather, the church's "predominant tuning"⁷⁸ is celebrative, even while engaged in struggle. Celebrative involvement in the world means involvement which is a parable of the gospel.⁷⁹

As the church's educational ministry seeks to equip persons for mission, becoming a celebrating community is of first importance. The teaching of individual or corporate moralism, however subtle or cloaked in pious phrases, must ruthlessly be rooted out. The mission of the church is far too important to be weighted down with guilt or

⁷⁶Ross Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁷⁷Smith, *The Convivial Company*, p. 110.

⁷⁸Ross Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁷⁹Lewis S. Mudge, Jr., *Why Is the Church in the World?* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1967), p. 67.

joyless self-justification.

Christian education must cultivate a comprehensive theological sensitivity, a nurturing of the awareness of God's presence and activity in the world. The address of God, to which the church has responded first in worship, is now found in the world. As William Stringfellow has written,

The cohesion and commonality of the vocation of Christians originates in their power to discern the truth of the Word of God in any event whatever, and precisely because the Word of God is present in all events, that power may be exercised in any event.⁸⁰

The cultivation of this "power of discernment" begins with a grasp of the Christian heritage, especially the Bible, as the normative witness to God's activity in the world. An exclusive focus on contemporary events will not lead persons to a full awareness of God's activity in those events, but when the historic tradition is respected and appropriated, it will lead learners to the world and to the continuation of God's speaking.⁸¹

The "raw materials" for the development of such theological sensitivity are thus both the message of the gospel and the facts of contemporary existence. Mission is rooted in the celebration of the gospel which provides an image of abundant humanness. The facts of life, impinging now on human beings, inform and deepen sensitivity to what God is doing now, and suggest avenues and resources for authentic

⁸⁰William Stringfellow, *A Private and Public Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 42.

⁸¹Thomas C. Oden, *Beyond Revolution* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), pp. 104-5.

mission. Learners, therefore, must not only be nurtured in the gospel message as it comes from traditional sources, but they must be enabled to interpret what-is-happening-now theologically.

The church's educational ministry must help learners to know what contemporary man is like and to develop an inclusive concern for all people as God's people. This means knowledge of what thwarts and stifles the human as well as what nourishes the human in contemporary life. As Smart says, "The Christian disciple is an intensive student of modern man . . . ,"⁸² concerned for the making-possible of what man can become in Jesus Christ.

Christian education must be unafraid of change. There has been an insidious form of conservatism in many of the church's teaching efforts, resisting and condemning all forms of change--as opposed to authentic conservatism which affirms enduring values.

. . . Too many teachers are still insisting that things be done the 'right' way. In such an atmosphere, goodness becomes synonymous with conformity. Messiness, noise, confusion and mistakes, out of which may come originality, creativity and genius, are suppressed in favor of neatness, quiet, order and 'being right,' out of which can come conservatism, cowardice, rigidity and smugness.⁸³

In such an atmosphere it is impossible to develop theological sensitivity. God is ever-active and his creation is ever-becoming, and Christian education, through its method as well as its content, must put nothing in the way of perception of God's dynamism.

⁸²Smart, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁸³*Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming*, p. 207.

Learners must be enabled to function within the realities of life in the world. An awareness is essential of the structures of power in society as well as a willingness and ability to use power responsibly.⁸⁴ Learners must be enabled to analyze general issues and locate the specifics where action may be both possible and effective.⁸⁵ There must be willingness to embrace compromise and accept fractional gains, as well as a sense of urgency which allows for no complacency when action is necessary and possible. Christian education must foster a readiness to face ambiguous situations and take risks, recognizing that "the church that makes an effort to share in God's mission in the world will sometimes be wrong, but the church that does nothing for fear of making mistakes will always be wrong."⁸⁶ Finally, there must be a pervasive recognition that Christian action and decision are not moral heroics--choices and acts are always involved in sin--but responses to God, whose judgment and forgiveness underlie and encompass human choosing and acting and being.

Equipping for mission does not happen in armchairs or isolated classrooms, but within a celebrating community whose worship is authenticated by its responses to God in the world. As Harold R. Fray says, " . . . *what the church does is the curriculum* of its educational

⁸⁴Gayraud S. Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 51-52.

⁸⁵J. Edward Carothers, *The Churches and Cruelty Systems* (New York: Friendship Press, 1970), pp. 119-120.

⁸⁶Harold R. Fray, Jr., *Conflict and Change in the Church* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1969), p. 83.

program."⁸⁷ "Learning by doing" is a sound educational principle, and it is an essential principle when the content is mission. For example, the ability to locate the specifics within the general can be developed only by looking at real issues. Therefore learners--even young children--must have the opportunity to act out their learnings in mission and to learn in the midst of their acting out. This is not a matter of thinking up "service projects" for children, but of meaningful participation in the mission of the whole community in a way that is both appropriate and understandable to the participants. On every age level there is a necessary rhythm from worship to study to mission and back again. Without that rhythm, learners may know a great deal about "missionary work," but they are not equipped for mission.

The church is a people who have gathered in response to what God has done, to celebrate the continuing divine-human dialogue. This celebration begins in worship and is the basis of the church's educational ministry, life-sharing fellowship, and world-serving mission. Without celebration, fellowship is joyless, mission is self-defeating, and education is impotent. With it, the whole life of the church is empowered by the Spirit of God, and abundant humanness becomes burgeoning possibility.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p. 30.

CHAPTER IV

THE SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY AS A CURRICULUM MODEL

. . . A curriculum is not a package of books, filmstrips, and the like, coming through the mail. It is not a thing or a stack of things. It is not material to be learned. It is a course to run, a task to do, a purpose to realize. It is the work of Christ's church, working in many local churches. When some of these churches combine their local initiative with cooperative large-scale planning, they carry out a denominational curriculum.¹

With these words, Roger L. Shinn points to quite a different understanding of curriculum than that held by many teachers. In its original meaning, the word "curriculum" was used by the ancient Romans to designate a racecourse.² Relating to Christian education, curriculum may be understood as "a course to run" which is planned and undertaken in order to enable learners' participation in the worshiping church. It is a cooperative venture, involving both denominational and local contributions. It includes all learning for which the church shares responsibility with learners.

An important task of curriculum building for Christian education involves the ordering and presentation of subject matter in ways which are appropriate to various age groups; but curriculum is much

¹Roger Lincoln Shinn, *The Educational Mission of Our Church* (Boston: United Church Press, 1962), p. 11.

²*Ibid.*, p. 9.

more than a structuring of content. Everything that has a bearing on teaching and learning in the church has a place in the curriculum--the use of data from the behavioral sciences, the formulation of goals and objectives, the evaluation and use of physical facilities, an understanding of the interpersonal meanings in the teacher-learner relationship, and the application of techniques for the evaluation of teaching-learning events--all of these, and more, are properly included in a curriculum along with the ordering and treatment of subject matter.

If the church's educational ministry is to avoid the haphazard appropriation of theories and methods, there must be a sense of wholeness in curriculum planning. The several elements of curriculum must be focused and unified both educationally and theologically. An organizing principle must be found for church education--a principle which is central to the Christian message and to the Christian church as well as consistent with the church's educational goal.

Worship is such a principle. As has been emphasized in earlier chapters of the present writing, worship is the conceptual center both for the church and for the educational ministry. In worship and its fruits, the gospel is placed in its appropriate context, which is the dynamism of the divine-human encounter. While the gospel is central to worship, in worship may be found the appropriate perspective from which to approach the teaching of the gospel.

The proposal of a unifying principle of conceptual center, however, is not enough for adequate curriculum planning. Curriculum not only must be unified; it must be structured in a way that is

consistent with its unity and workable in educational practice. A most fruitful concept in this respect is that of the *curriculum model*-- a coherent structure for the development of a curriculum in terms of that curriculum's organizing principle. Having a model enables one to bring the elements of curriculum into focus, but it also helps to place those elements in appropriate sequential or dialogic relationships, informing the whole educational enterprise so that the organizing principle of the curriculum will pervade actual teaching-learning events.

If worship is the conceptual center for Christian education, the church's curriculum model must be consistent with worship. Such a model will reflect the dynamic character of worship as a dialogue-- it will stress learning as participation in dialogue rather than as the stockpiling of information. There will be a sense of progression, taking into account both the ways people learn at different age levels and God's ever-moving, ever-disclosing address. The model may speak of stages or steps in age-graded development, but these will be seen as structured emphases rather than slices of the faith to be parceled out at different age levels. The whole gospel will be communicated at every level, and what is emphasized at one point will be present at every other point as well. Finally, the tone of the model will be predominantly celebrative, flowing from the celebrations of the community.

Among the possible candidates for a curriculum model centered in worship, a specific liturgy is most obvious. Using an order of worship as a model would meet the above criteria and present several

further advantages. The Bible, church history, Christian doctrine, the language of relationships, and all the other settings for the divine-human dialogue would be placed appropriately within the scope of such a model. The movement in liturgy from God's address to man's response would provide a coherent structure in terms of which the gospel may be understood in its dynamic character: the form of classic liturgy, as well as its content, expresses this dynamism and affirms the continuity of worship with all life.³ Using a liturgy as a model would place the proclamation and response to God's Word unmistakably within the corporate worshiping community; it would not only unite the sanctuary and the classroom, but unify the whole church in study, life-sharing, mission, and worship.

Once it has been decided that a specific liturgy will be used as a curriculum model for the church's educational ministry, the choice remains as to which liturgy is best for such use. Not every order of worship meets the theological and educational requirements for a fruitful model. Nevertheless, it would seem essential that a liturgical curriculum model for a local church should be based upon liturgy which is actually in use in that church. Therefore, the first task for a great many churches involves the renewal of worship and the restoration of responsible and understandable liturgical form. This does not mean that churches should appropriate rigid liturgical structures, but that a sense of significant order and movement in worship is essential.

³ John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), pp. 441-42.

The most fruitful place to look for a liturgy which will be adequate as a curriculum model is in the liturgical heritage of the church. Here, among the classic liturgies which have been developed over the centuries, it is not difficult to identify a liturgical mainstream and to detect significant departures from that mainstream. Among the characteristics of this classical liturgical heritage are truly kerygmatic theological content, genuine corporateness, and an emphasis on the movement from address to response. As Macquarrie says, the classic liturgical forms " . . . are the best protection for the authentic but delicate movements of Christian prayer and worship. These forms preserve their communicational character and safeguard against individual aberrations and perversions."⁴ A liturgy which preserves the classic emphases of Christian worship, though its language may be contemporary, is to be preferred as a curriculum model.

In recent years many denominations have published liturgies as a result of a renewed interest and study of this classical tradition in worship.⁵ The "Service for the Lord's Day,"⁶ prepared by a Joint Committee on Worship for three Presbyterian denominations, was published in its present form in 1970. This liturgy is typical of

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 441.

⁵See, e.g., the liturgies in *Word and Action* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969).

⁶Joint Committee on Worship, "The Service for the Lord's Day," *The Worshipbook--Services* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), pp. 21-42. (The Committee is hereafter cited as JCW.)

its contemporaries as produced by several other denominations in that it has a particularly rich historical heritage--it draws consciously upon liturgical materials from every period in the church's history. The service represents a return to the Reformed liturgical tradition of these three denominations, but it frequently goes behind the Reformers in order to reflect a broad catholicity. It is a liturgy of remarkable clarity, vigor, and drama. The "Service for the Lord's Day" provides the curriculum model upon which this chapter is based.

AN APPROACH TO THE MODEL

The intention in proposing a liturgical curriculum model is to help those charged with the church's educational ministry at the local level to fit that ministry into a conceptual pattern that makes sense in terms of the function of the church. Curriculum planning is a crucial need at the local church; such planning must not be left entirely to the denominations. Church education will fail if it assumes that all the necessary planning has been done already in the national office. Therefore, what is being proposed here is a model primarily for parish-level consideration.

To emphasize curriculum planning at the level of the parish does not mean an abandonment of denominational planning or nationally-produced resources. There are many advantages to drawing upon the work of a denomination's national educational agency.⁷ Curriculum planning,

⁷See, e.g., Shinn, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

however, must not remain in the highly centralized state represented by denominational publications. The peculiar problems and opportunities of the local parish make local planning a necessity. Both education and worship take place in the local parish, not in the denomination. If the educational ministry of the church is to flow from its celebrations, the final planning must be done by celebrants-in-community at the local level. The use of a liturgy as a curriculum model, therefore, will be of most help as local planners draw upon a wide variety of resources--including those prepared by denominational workers--and seek to build a curriculum for the parish.

General Characteristics

A chart of the curriculum model appears on the following page. The designations of "Gathering," "Proclamation," and "Response" are not original rubrics in the liturgy, but they indicate the major movements of the service. The four learning modes indicated in the chart are taken from United Presbyterian curriculum materials.⁸ Thus a Presbyterian liturgy is related to a Presbyterian curriculum plan. The expectation, of course, is that this model will be used primarily in churches of a Presbyterian denomination.

The model is for an age-graded curriculum. The designations of age groupings are intended as general suggestions, however, and not rigid norms. The development of certain nongraded programs is to be

⁸Locke E. Bowman, Jr., *Planning Teacher Education in the Parish* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1967), p. 76, and elsewhere in the curriculum plan entitled *Christian Faith and Action*.

CHART OF THE CURRICULUM MODEL

| THE LITURGY | LEARNING MODES | AGE GROUPS |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| <u>Gathering</u> | <u>Consciousness</u> | <u>Infancy- age 6</u> |
| The Call of God Gathering as Community Affirmation of God's Worth Confession of Sin Declaration of Pardon Thanksgiving and Praise | Awareness of the community and its basis Sense of one's own belonging and of being addressed by God | |
| <u>Proclamation</u> | | |
| Scripture | <u>Communication</u> | <u>Grades 1-6</u> |
| | The learner in dialogue with the heritage | |
| Sermon | <u>Exploration</u> | <u>Grades 7-10</u> |
| | The learner in dialogue with the church and the world in light of the heritage | |
| <u>Response</u> | <u>Reflection/Action</u> | <u>Grade 11 -adult</u> |
| Affirming Sharing Celebrating Serving | Reflecting on contemporary issues in light of the gospel Responsible action in continuity with worship | |

encouraged. Even when age-grading is applied with some regularity, it must be emphasized that the movements in the liturgy and the indicated modes of learning are not to be viewed as plateaus or unrepeatable events. In the model, each phase of worship and education is to be understood as cutting across all the others, resulting not in disjunctive stages but in a structure of emphases corresponding to the movements in worship and to the ways growing persons learn.

A curriculum model must be recognized as the servant of curriculum, and not the other way around. Teaching and learning must not be distorted and manipulated in order to fit the model. Moreover, curriculum--the gamut of church education--is the servant of the worshipping church. The church is finally the church not because it teaches, but because it responds to and celebrates the address of God.

Reformed Worship and the Service for the Lord's Day

The early history of American Presbyterianism is marked by an almost complete lack of awareness of traditional Reformed emphases in worship.⁹ Even as American Presbyterians began to be genuinely interested in liturgical renewal toward the beginning of the nineteenth century, the great majority had no idea that there might be a liturgical heritage they could claim--a heritage which would be Reformed, and neither Anglican nor Lutheran nor "papist."

Some liturgical scholars, notably Charles W. Baird, helped

⁹ Julius Melton, *Presbyterian Worship in America* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1967), p. 17.

greatly to dispel this ignorance. Baird's careful work,¹⁰ which dealt with a number of the classic Reformed liturgies, demonstrated that the Reformed liturgical heritage was a fruitful basis for the re-ordering of worship in the American Presbyterian churches.¹¹ With this evidence behind it, the movement for liturgical renewal gathered momentum. During the first half of the twentieth century the General Assembly authorized three succeeding editions (1906, 1932, and 1946) of an extensive service-book entitled *The Book of Common Worship*.¹² This book represented a significant advance in the consciousness of Presbyterians of their liturgical heritage.

Still there were no authoritative constitutional standards to reflect this growing consciousness. Therefore, when a committee was appointed in 1955 to revise the service-book once more, the committee's first request was that it be allowed to prepare a new "Directory for Worship" for consideration as part of the church's constitution. The request was granted, and the project, begun in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., was joined by the United Presbyterian Church of North America and the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. ("Southern"). With this development, a Joint Committee on Worship came into existence,

¹⁰Charles W. Baird, *The Presbyterian Liturgies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957). (Originally published under the title *Eutaxia* in 1855.)

¹¹Melton, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-74.

¹²*The Book of Common Worship* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1906, 1932, and 1946).

which was later joined by still another body, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. (In 1958, two of these denominations--the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and the United Presbyterian Church in North America--merged to form the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.)

The new "Directory for the Worship of God,"¹³ approved in 1961, takes strong theological positions based on Reformed liturgical doctrine. The initiative of God in worship is clearly acknowledged, and emphasis is given to the corporate and active character of worship. A responsible freedom in the ordering of worship is encouraged. The document commends not only Scripture, but traditional and contemporary materials, as appropriate for worship. Soundly rooted in Reformed theology is the Directory's discussion of the relation of Word and sacrament, which overflows into its treatment of sermon, scripture, and response by the people. The document gives prominence to both pulpit and table by placing them beside each other as two parts of the same action, and the ultimate significance of Scripture, sermon, and sacrament is affirmed to be their common manifestation of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.¹⁴

Probably the most important structural change in the liturgy

¹³"The Directory for the Worship of God," in *The Constitution of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (1970-71 edition; Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1970), II, par. 16.01-24.05. (Hereafter cited as D. W.)

¹⁴D. W., 16.01-18.03.

grows out of the Directory's theological emphasis on the unity of Word and sacrament. The sacraments, and particularly the Lord's Supper, are no longer to be regarded as occasional appendages to liturgy, but as integral to the real nature of Christian worship. The Directory, perhaps more consciously than any Presbyterian document in two or three centuries, has " . . . returned to the central rite of both our Catholic and our Reformed heritage, namely, the Eucharist."¹⁵ The concept of the Word of God in the Directory makes it essential that the sacraments be considered as normative in public worship, and not as optional extras. Renewed impetus is given, therefore, to the insistence of Calvin that the church return to its primitive practice and celebrate the Lord's Supper with regularity and frequency.¹⁶

Recalling the corporate nature of the worshiping church as pictured in the Directory, it should be pointed out the Scripture and sermon are not simply to be read and delivered; they are to be heard and *responded to*. Moreover, the sacraments, while having the element of "address" in them, are also the churches responses to the Word. This movement from address to response emphasizes that the corporateness of the church is not of human making; it is a corporateness which is the Body of Christ. This emphasis also suggests that worship is to be dialogic in form, as well as in spirit. All too common in the American

¹⁵JCW, *Service for the Lord's Day and Lectionary for the Christian Year* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 44.

¹⁶D. W., 19.09; cf. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), IV:xvii.44, p. 1422.

Presbyterian church is what can only be called the "homogenized" service, in which elements are thrown together in no discernable pattern, with variations in posture, inflection, or tonality introduced to keep worshipers interested--and these variations, too often, are mistaken for movement in worship. The Directory emphatically rejects such non-ordering of worship in favor of an ordering which is biblically and historically responsible as well as relevant to the life of the contemporary parish.¹⁷

Although it takes strong stands, the Directory does not fall into the trap of coercion. Continually emphasized is the element of freedom with responsibility, and the fact that in the Presbyterian church it is the session of the local parish, not the Directory or the service-book, which is responsible for the ordering of worship.¹⁸

The General Assembly approved the present form of the new service-book in 1970, and it was published in that year with the title *The Worshipbook--Services*. The "Service for the Lord's Day" from this book provides the curriculum model which will be interpreted in the following pages.

INTERPRETATION OF THE MODEL

The "Service for the Lord's Day, " as it appears in *The Worshipbook*, reflects the theological and liturgical affirmations of the

¹⁷D. W., 19.01-19.11.

¹⁸D. W., 16.04, 19.01.

Directory for Worship. The service bears a close resemblance, both in structure and in content, to some of the classical Reformed liturgies¹⁹ as well as to liturgies dating from the early centuries of the church.²⁰

The service is emphatically dialogical in structure. The movements have been labeled "Gathering," "Proclamation," and "Response," and in the curriculum model "Proclamation" has been further divided into Scripture and sermon in order to provide a four-movement structure corresponding to the four learning modes of the curriculum. Thus the model, while it moves continually from address to response, has a progressive movement as well, relating to the progression of human growth.

The curriculum model, therefore, will emphasize what may be called a "pacing" of teaching and learning. As Jerome S. Bruner maintains, "A curriculum should involve the mastery of skills that in turn lead to the mastery of still more powerful ones, the establishment of self-reward sequences."²¹ This is not a matter of dividing the subject matter into portions to be taught at different age levels, but of determining the appropriate way of teaching the whole faith at each

¹⁹Cf. Martin Bucer's service of 1537, outlined in Bard Thompson (ed.), *Liturgies of the Western Church* (Cleveland: World, 1961), pp. 197-208; and John Knox' liturgy of 1556, outlined in Thompson, pp. 265-305.

²⁰Cf. a reconstruction of a late third- or early fourth-century liturgy in W. D. Maxwell, *An Outline of Christian Worship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 17-18.

²¹Jerome S. Bruner, *Toward a Theory of Instruction* (New York: Norton, 1968), p. 35.

level. Bruner continues, "There is an appropriate version of any skill or knowledge that may be imparted at whatever age one wishes to begin teaching--however preparatory the version may be."²² Relating education to worship through a liturgical curriculum model may well be a means of avoiding the all-too-common tendency of local planners to withhold significant contents of the faith until it is felt that learners are "ready" for those contents.

Adequate pacing of education, however, will make it possible for learners to have many successful learning experiences, thus establishing the "self-reward sequences" of which Bruner speaks. In the model, then, attention will be given to some of the general characteristics of learners in American culture at the different age levels--personality needs, developmental tasks, levels of capacity for conceptualization and abstract thinking, characteristics related to physical development, and patterns of social relatedness, for example. Knowledge of age-level characteristics may be exceedingly valuable. However, such knowledge must be used with extreme caution:

. . . There are libraries full of this sort of information and a flood of research to be examined on almost anything from the ossification of the wristbones in the infant to typical dating behavior of late adolescence. Training the teacher to know the accumulated facts about behavior in the abstract is comparatively simple. Helping a teacher to understand a child is quite a different matter.²³

Age-level characteristics are generalizations, and as such they fit

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming* (Washington: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1962), p. 81.

no single individual. To take these generalizations too seriously would lead to planning a curriculum for persons who do not exist. Individuals differ, and "each person, whatever his age, is at a period that is crucial for his life."²⁴ Teachers must be prepared to discard any "fact" about the supposed characteristics of learners, so that they may understand individual learners. Moreover, the address of God is not bound by the findings of the behavioral scientists. From a theological as well as an educational viewpoint, then, it is not appropriate to base the educational ministry of the church upon general statements of age-level needs or traits. These statements will be used as they seem helpful, but it must be kept in mind that the curriculum is rooted not in the findings of the researchers but in a theological event--the liturgy.

The following interpretation of the curriculum model will be structured according to the four basic movements in the model. A movement will first be described in terms of the liturgy;²⁵ the elements of the service will be described in considerable detail, noting some of the historical and theological background of the various elements as well as the way in which they relate to each other, in order to gain a "feel" for the heritage and dynamism of the liturgy. Then

²⁴Lee J. Gable, *Christian Nurture Through the Church* (New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1955), p. 12.

²⁵The elements will be emphasized in italics. Where possible, the italicized labels will be those which are named in the service; otherwise, accepted liturgical terminology will be used.

the movement will be described in educational terms, focusing on a particular age level. The emphasis here will not be on the development of specific lesson plans but on an over-all orientation for planning and teaching related to the age group under discussion.

Gathering

The address of God constitutes the worshiping church as the people respond by gathering as community. The first words of the service are the *Call to Worship*: "Let us worship God."²⁶ The service provides several alternative continuations of the Call, all taken from Scripture and all brief, including a *Trinitarian Affirmation* which specifies in traditional language the theological foundation of worship. Then a *versicle* ("Praise the Lord. The Lord's name be praised."), said responsively, answers the Call to Worship. Already there has been a movement from address to response.

Some churches continue to use an invocation at this point, instead of, or in addition to, a Call to Worship. The invocation presents a theological difficulty, however: if the community is assured of God's presence as they worship him--if, in fact, God *calls* the community to worship--why, then, the need to "invoke" his presence? Many have used a prayer of adoration in place of the invocation.

The people, who have been standing since the opening of worship, now sing a *hymn of praise*, continuing their response to the Call

²⁶Unless otherwise noted, the basis of the liturgical discussion will be JCW, "The Service for the Lord's Day," *The Worshipbook*, pp. 25-42, from which all uncited quotations are taken.

to Worship which they began in the versicle.

In the words associated with the Call to Worship, the people have now remembered what God has done, and they have responded in praise. But to remember God's undeserved love is also to be confronted with one's own unworthiness. A further response, then, that of *Confession of Sin*, is called for. The minister bids the people to this prayer with Scriptural words. Two alternative forms of the confession are given, but many churches prefer to use still other forms as well.

The general confession of sin is a distinctly Reformed contribution to the liturgy. In *Confiteor*, in the Roman medieval rite, had been a part of the ministers' private preparation for the mass. Diebold Schwarz, however, a predecessor of Martin Bucer in Strasbourg and a most creative liturgist, adapted the *Confiteor*, translated it, and had it said aloud as a general confession of sin in his liturgy of 1524. This is the first time such a general confession appeared in the liturgy.²⁷

Some churches include the *Kyrie Eleison*, as a supplication for mercy, within this movement of confession. The provisional editions of the service allowed for this possibility; however, the present edition does not, inasmuch as more recent liturgical scholarship views the *Kyrie* as more of an affirmation than as a supplication.

After the Confession of Sin, the minister pronounces the *Declaration of Pardon*. Several alternative Scriptural sentences are

²⁷Maxwell, *op. cit.*, p. 88; also p. 88, n. 3.

provided. The people are invited to participate in the declaration by affirming together, "In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven." Even when the minister speaks these words, though, he does so " . . . not as one whose words procure forgiveness, but as one who declares to all assembled the reality of the divine mercy."²⁸

Here is one of the specifically evangelical parts of the service. The Reformers argued that the power to forgive sin does not rest in the church. Rather, forgiveness *is* the Gospel we preach, the good news of the cross. Therefore, in all the Reformation services there was a bold announcement of mercy. . . .

Calvin [explains] . . . that we must announce the mercy of God in no uncertain terms. Our task is to declare and not to determine to whom the declaration applies. God himself will work in men's hearts by faith to apply the assurance as he chooses. For Calvin, repentance is not a prior condition for mercy but the appropriate response to mercy and also, of course, a work of God himself.²⁹

This bold declaration may be followed by an *exhortation* to obedience or the *Summary of the Law*.³⁰ The position of this element in the liturgy emphasizes that the obedience which is required is nothing else than a response to forgiveness.

The people continue their response to the Declaration of Pardon with an expression of thanksgiving. It may be the singing of the *Gloria Patri* or some other hymn of praise, but the liturgy commends a new understanding of the *Kyrie Eleison* as a joyous affirmation:

²⁸D. W., 19.05.

²⁹JCW, *The Book of Common Worship: Provisional Services* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 142; see also Calvin, *op. cit.*, III:iv.14, 18, 21; pp. 638-39, 644, 647.

³⁰Matthew 22:37-40.

"You are the Lord, giver of mercy! . . ." (The use of the vernacular is interesting here, in view of the fact that the *Kyrie* seems to be the only part of the liturgy which survived the Middle Ages without being translated out of Greek!) This affirmative use of the *Kyrie* reflects the view of some scholars that its original character was that of an ascription of praise.³¹

Once again, the dialogic movement of the liturgy is expressed: the people's confession of sin, which is itself a response to God, gives occasion for another word from God, to which the people once more respond with affirmation, joy, thanksgiving, and praise. The service has made unmistakably clear the character of the worshiping church as a gathered community responding to God, and it has likewise made clear the reason for the celebration.

The task of Christian education relating to children under six years of age is to introduce them into this community which knows itself as the celebrating church. In a real sense, the "church school" for very young children is the whole community of the church and not simply those settings and experiences which are planned for teaching and learning. In fact, at every age the church teaches through the integrity, power, and joy of its own life and witness.

Young children, especially, need a growing consciousness of a network of relationships in which they are welcomed, cherished, and supported. The infant, of course, is crucially dependent upon a

³¹ Iris V. Cully, *Christian Worship and Church Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 23.

supporting community simply for physical survival, but also for the development of a foundationally positive attitude toward oneself and toward life which Erikson calls "basic trust."³² The circle of this community normally begins with the infant-mother relationship, soon expanding to include, by the time a child reaches kindergarten age, a large number of significant others.

The relationship of the young child to the community of the church has theological implications far beyond basic personality needs, however. As Ralph R. Sundquist, Jr., points out, "the child's entrance into the church [at baptism] is real and not a mere verbal accommodation."³³ The emphasis in the first movement in the liturgy, that persons are called into community by the address of God and not because of their own worthiness, is made especially clear when even helpless infants are included as members of the church.

In the liturgy, at the baptismal service for infants, it is announced, "This child of God is now received into the holy catholic church. See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and we are!"³⁴ This is not a provisional, but an actual reception of a member of the church, and the language of the liturgy makes it clear that all church members are there

³²Erik H. Erikson, *Identity* (New York: Norton, 1968), p. 82.

³³Ralph R. Sundquist, Jr., *Whom God Chooses* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1964), p. 23.

³⁴JCW, "The Sacrament of Baptism," *The Worshipbook*, p. 45.

because of God's grace. Children who are not baptized are not thereby excluded: baptism is a sign of grace and not a ritual bestowal of grace. Just as the Declaration of Pardon is pronounced with no attempt to define to whom it applies, the welcome to children in the community is extended to all.

Sherrill suggests that the "central problem" of early childhood is "individuation."³⁵ The infant has to learn to distinguish himself from not-himself, a learning which is basic to communication and to the development of identity. There is always a relational quality to this learning, as the child becomes conscious of his own name, and as he gains some skill in communication--particularly as he develops an ability to use language. He can now assert himself and say "No." Moreover, as motor and perceptual skills develop, the child is able to explore the relationships between himself and the persons and things around him.³⁶ He begins to find out who he is as he relates with others. If he experiences his environment as basically trustworthy, his separateness from his mother and from the rest of the world will be accepted as an affirmation of himself. If he experiences the world as basically threatening or rejecting, his separateness will be sensed as loss and denial.³⁷

³⁵Lewis Joseph Sherrill, *The Struggle of the Soul* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), p. 24.

³⁶Harry G. Goodykoontz, *The Persons We Teach* (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1965), pp. 142-43.

³⁷Erik H. Erikson, "Youth and the Life Cycle," in Don E. Hamachek (ed.), *Human Dynamics in Psychology and Education* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1968), pp. 306-7.

As the growing child seeks order and meaning in his experience, he needs to be embraced by the worshiping community in such a way that he can trust and enjoy his belongingness. As Wayne R. Rood says, " . . . It is the attitude of other persons that exposes the child to the address of God, and he tends to move forward, evade or withdraw in precisely the same way he is learning to respond to human beings."³⁸ The primary mode of learning, which may be described as "consciousness," is a relational mode, and the most significant teaching method will be " . . . to be a certain kind of person."³⁹ Slusser explains,

. . . That kind of person may be described as, first, one who represents in his person, and who can symbolize in words and deeds suitable to the particular audience, the distinctively Christian values. Second, one who is personally warm and approachable, one to whom children can feel near. Third, one who is in the teaching room to serve and not to use the situation for his own advantage. Fourth, one who is spontaneous, who naturally helps children to generate plans and ideas. Finally, one who is able to help children interpret events in a meaningful way, so that persons can find their own fulfillment.⁴⁰

It is most important that young children in the church be encouraged to play, not only because children learn by playing, but because play and worship are so closely related. If a child is taught that his every activity must produce useful results--that he must "learn something" or make some contribution in order to justify his

³⁸Wayne R. Rood, *The Art of Teaching Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 43.

³⁹Gerald H. Slusser, *A Dynamic Approach to Church Education* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1968), pp. 99-100.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 100.

activity--then his impulses toward both play and worship will be thwarted. How often the preschool department of the church school is staffed by teachers who feel they must fill every moment with "lessons" to be learned! A child in such a class is unable to experience the joy of guilt-free, spontaneous play, and he may never know the exhilaration of worship made possible by grace alone. It is of crucial importance to let the children play, to encourage play, and to help children interpret and symbolize their experiences as they play. This can be done only by " . . . teachers who so live by grace that they too can play."⁴¹

The emphasis on play does not mean that formal teaching is not possible in the early years. The teaching, however, will be situational in nature--it will be teaching about meanings and values in experiences now happening. Even teaching of the Bible will be effective only when children are enabled to experience and participate in biblical events. Skillfully-told stories and dramatically-related events may evoke this kind of participation, but the primary language by which biblical truth is communicated, by which the Bible becomes existential for children, is the language of relationships. Relational, situational teaching is not only effective teaching; it partakes of the very nature of God's address.⁴²

⁴¹Jack A. Worthington and Vivian R. Worthington, *Designing Church Education for Children Under 6* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1969), p. 30.

⁴²Lewis Joseph Sherrill, *The Gift of Power* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 178.

The teacher who seeks to help young children become familiar with the Bible and with the ideas and convictions of the Christian faith must face two related facts. First, children think differently than adults. The complex abstractions which adults use every day are incomprehensible to young children; therefore the use of conceptual complexities when teaching young children--even when such language is perfectly understandable to the teacher--will inevitably distort the communication. The second fact is that the words of the Bible, theology, and church history, since they are addressed almost exclusively to adults and since they very often represent attempts to express meanings and convictions which cannot be stated in concrete terms, are most often quite baffling to children.⁴³

Teachers must discard the idea, frequently held with some fondness, that there are many passages in the Bible which were written for children. Many teachers seem to believe that if a passage contains mostly one-syllable words it is suitable for children as it stands. Yet most biblical passages, even the monosyllabic ones, present formidable conceptual problems for children. Moreover, some of the most difficult ideas in Christendom are expressed in single syllables: sin, grace, faith, love, God. It is sometimes possible to interpret the meanings of such words in language which is comprehensible to children, but ultimately the *only* way of conveying such meanings to young children is through non-verbal, relational

⁴³Lewis Joseph Sherrill, *Understanding Children* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1939), pp. 20-21.

communication.

Because the child, his parents, his teachers, and all others with whom he relates are human, even relational communication will not be free of distortion. Some relationships will be fragile and undependable. Even the child who has gained a basic sense of trust will find that neither he nor others are always trustworthy. Significant others will disappoint him, offend his sense of fairness, and probably hurt him. He will disappoint himself, and he will feel ashamed or guilty. He will find that being right does not always win approval, and that doing the right things is not always fun or even pleasant--and he may learn this perhaps in spite of what his church school teachers tell him. The child, existentially if not conceptually, knows the meaning of suffering and sin.

The liturgy, in contrast to the content of some preschool lessons, takes sin seriously. The gathered community boldly confesses their corporate and individual fallenness. If the child is to know himself as a member of a community in which sin is not the last word, the community must be one in which sin is honestly faced and acknowledged. Through his relationships with others in the church, the child may learn that sin is an ultimate No to be disclaimed or held at bay as long as possible. If the atmosphere in the community is one of moralism and self-righteousness, the child eventually may learn that his unworthiness condemns him. In a genuinely worshiping community, however, in which education is both honest and celebrative, the child can come to understand sin as a penultimate No which is comprehended

and overcome in the ultimate Yes of God's forgiveness, and the young learner can participate whole-heartedly in the community's joyful response to the good news of God's grace.

Proclamation--Scripture

The liturgy of proclamation, taken as a whole, may be understood again as a response to all that has gone before as well as a new occasion for God's address. "After the people have received the good news of God's mercy and respond gratefully, they listen to God's Word to know his will that they may obey him."⁴⁴

This part of the liturgy begins with a *Prayer for Illumination*, that the Scripture to be read and proclaimed might be heard and understood. Two suggestions are provided in the liturgy for this prayer. As an alternative, the *Collect for the Day* is suggested--a prayer which "collects" the thoughts of worshipers toward the special emphases of the seasons and festivals of the Church Year. The use of these collects and other seasonal elements is especially significant when the Lectionary⁴⁵ is followed, since it, too, reflects the Church Year.

Readings from Scripture follow immediately. The liturgy provides for readings from both Testaments.

Public worship will always include the reading and hearing of the written word of God. . . . It is appropriate that there be reading from both Old and New Testaments, that all present

⁴⁴JCW, *The Book of Common Worship: Provisional Services*, pp. 142-43.

⁴⁵JCW, "Lectionary for the Christian Year," *The Worshipbook*, pp. 165-75.

may understand the Old Testament as the preparation for the New, and the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old, to the end that the unity and completeness of God's revelation to his people may continually be set forth in their midst.⁴⁶

Before each reading, the reader says, "The lesson is . . . Listen for the word of God!" This language emphasizes that God's address, and not simply some human word, is to be perceived in the reading of Scripture, but it also places emphasis on the responsibility of worshipers actively to *listen* for God's Word.

The *Old Testament Lesson* suggests a link with the synagogue service and Jewish heritage, and thus with the worship of Jesus, his disciples, and the very earliest Christians. Although this reading has been omitted all too often in Reformed and other Protestant worship, it is certainly the oldest established Scripture reading in the church.

Following the reading from the Old Testament there may be some form of singing: perhaps a *canticle* or *psalm*, but more likely an *anthem* sung by the choir. If the anthem does take place here, both the Directory⁴⁷ and the sense of the liturgy suggest that it should be seen as a response to the reading of Scripture, or have something to do with the Scripture for the day--and as such, it would call for a good deal more care and attention to context than most choir directors exercise. Iris Cully and others suggest that the anthem's place is not here, but at the offertory, since it is the choir's offering.⁴⁸

⁴⁶D. W., 19.11.

⁴⁷D. W., 19.03.

⁴⁸Cully, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

Whether or not music intervenes, the Old Testament Lesson is followed by the *New Testament Lesson(s)*. Whether there are to be readings from both Epistle and Gospel is left open. The *Epistle* reading recalls the fact that these apostolic writings were read in some of the earliest services of Christian worship, having a place in the liturgy perhaps as much as a century before the New Testament canon was fixed.⁴⁹ The *Gospel* reading has been understood traditionally as the climax of the lections. The "Memoirs of the Apostles"⁵⁰ which were read in the worship of the primitive church probably included fragmentary or documentary predecessors of the Gospels as they are known today. In later centuries, even when the other lections fell into disuse, the Gospel reading was most often retained.

Through the words of the Old and New Testaments, God speaks his Word to the gathered community. This is not a reading of ancient folklore or a detached recital of events long past; God is speaking, and the worshiping church participates now in the continuing dialogue. This portion of the liturgy manifests what is true throughout worship: God speaks, and his people respond.

The prominent place which is given in the liturgy to the reading and hearing of Scripture is emphasized especially as the curriculum model focuses on the elementary school years. The "consciousness" mode of learning, typical of earlier childhood, persists--the

⁴⁹Maxwell, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 12.

church continues to embrace the learner in such a way that he is aware of belonging and can trust and enjoy the community. Non-verbal, relational teaching remains important. But the child has now developed conceptual and verbal skills to the extent that he may enter into the process of interpretation in a more conscious and deliberate way than before, through a more extensive and sophisticated use of language. While in the preschool years the stress was on the address of God through a sense of community and relationships, the emphasis now broadens to include the Bible and the tradition of the church--elements which were there from the beginning but which are now brought more sharply into focus as settings for God's activity. This second movement in the curriculum may be called the "communication" phase.⁵¹

In this phase of the curriculum, as in all the others, the context for education is the worshiping church. If, as Iris Cully maintains, " . . . the basic reality of the church can never be experienced apart from the church at worship,"⁵² to exclude children from worship is to cut them off from the central experience of belonging to the church. Moreover, if the conviction that children are members is taken seriously, such exclusion denies the corporate integrity of worship. The regular inclusion of children in worship will affirm the wholeness of the church and the rightness of the children's belonging, and it may well provide a measure of celebrative

⁵¹Slusser, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

⁵²Iris V. Cully, *The Dynamics of Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), p. 159.

spontaneity which often only the young can bring. The child of elementary school age, however, is ready to come to grips, much more specifically and deliberately than before, with the *reason* for the celebration which is worship.

As the child begins the long period of schooling which is normative in Western society, he encounters the "outside world" in a rather emphatic way. His family remains important, but two other kinds of relationships grow increasingly crucial: those with adults in authority, and those with peers.⁵³ Learning to get along with children his own age undoubtedly represents the most significant task for the child; as Robert J. Havighurst points out, "whether the teacher pays any attention to it or not, the child's chief concern is with this task."⁵⁴ A child's peer-relationships, however, are not isolated from his relationships with adults; especially in school he must learn to get along simultaneously with age-mates and with adults.

In all his relationships, the child's sense of selfhood and adequacy comes to be based more and more on the development of skills--on the ability to do things, to make things, to undertake tasks and produce acceptable results.⁵⁵ School introduces the child to a world where even play is competitive and skill-oriented, and it initiates

⁵³Sherrill, *The Struggle of the Soul*, p. 38.

⁵⁴Robert J. Havighurst, *Developmental Tasks and Education* (New York: McKay, 1952), p. 18.

⁵⁵Erikson, "Youth and the Life Cycle," p. 307.

him into the realm of adult intellectual concerns, in which basic verbal, computational, and conceptual skills are highly valued. His standing with his peers, with adults, and with himself, is related intimately to how well he can do things.

To value persons exclusively on the basis of skill and productivity is, of course, inconsistent with the gospel. A child needs to know that he is accepted, valued, and loved even when he fails. Yet his need for a basic sense of competence must not be denied. The goal of Christian education is related to the development of abilities, and education in the church must provide the learner with experiences of success in acquiring and using skills.

That phase of the curriculum which relates to the elementary grades, taking its cue from the liturgy, reflects the church's concern that the learner should become acquainted with the Christian heritage, particularly the Bible. Basic biblical knowledge is a goal for this age-group, as well as the acquisition of fundamental tools and understandings which may lead to further exploration and interpretation later on.

Communication, as a descriptive term for the teaching-and-learning mode typical of this phase in the curriculum, does not mean the simple transfer of facts from the teacher's head to the learner's, but a dynamic process of interaction. Iris Cully says, "Communication is the attempt of people to form meaningful relationships with one another. Participation leads to recognition. Recognition seeks a

way of expression. The expression is communication."⁵⁶ A teaching method which excludes participative interaction is not communication, and it is likely also to exclude any meaningful understanding of the Bible. A dialogic style of communication is essential partly because of the pedagogical importance of participation. More urgently, however, the nature of the Bible itself demands a dynamic educational approach. The intentionality of the biblical text is that it should address the learner in the context of a dialogue--the learner brings himself, his own situation, his own history, expectations, and understandings; teachers and other learners bring their distinctive contributions; and they are drawn into the biblical events as the text speaks. Text and learners are in communication: valid teaching of the Bible is possible only within this interactive dynamism. The goal is not detached scholarship or objective "knowledge" of the Bible. The goal is the dialogue itself, enlivened by the expectancy that in the interaction of text and learner, God is speaking. Thus the participative style of communication is pervasively a celebrative style.

Within this dialogic encounter between learner and text, the use of scholarly tools and insights finds its proper place. In fact, a growing ability to use historical-critical tools will help to meet the school-age child's need for a sense of personal competence, integrating the fulfillment of that need within the exhilaration of discovery and the joy of being relevantly addressed. The child finds, to

⁵⁶Cully, *The Dynamics of Christian Education*, p. 147.

his delight, that he *can* intelligently interpret biblical passages and events, and that all the while the text is interpreting *him*.

The elementary school years encompass great differences among children. These differences are not only general--as first-graders are different from sixth-graders--but decidedly specific, involving each individual's unique capabilities, interests, and needs. The selection of biblical materials must be done on the basis of the gospel's intersection with the concerns of learners at each age level, and the teaching of the Bible must be done in a way which takes fully into account the verbal and conceptual abilities of each child. This is a difficult task: the Bible, while it is relevant to children, was not written for them.

It is certainly inappropriate to select biblical materials uncritically and present them to children without reference to the intellectual problems posed by the passages or the relevance of those passages to the needs and concerns of children. Yet it is equally inappropriate to select passages and present them without regard to context or in such a way as to distort their real meaning. Biblical literature may be read on several different levels, but the level at which it is read during childhood must not be inconsistent with more mature perspectives. What is taught in the elementary school years must provide the learner with a basic set of tools and images which will not have to be discarded later on, but only developed and refined as he interprets Scripture in youth and adulthood.

When planners and teachers are most interested in making the

Bible relevant to the needs, capacities, and concerns of children, there will be a dangerous tendency to force texts to say things quite alien to their original intentionality. When the Bible is not met on its own terms, tragic mis-education results. Children are presented with heroes, models, examples of moral greatness, rather than with stories about real human beings whose lives were addressed by God. The earthy parts of the Bible are sanitized and deodorized. Myth is either required to be taken literally or it is ignored or explained away. Prophetic and apocalyptic literature is almost totally absent from curricula designed for the elementary years. An artificial chronology is imposed upon the Bible--particularly upon the life of Jesus and the travels of Paul. Easter is linked with the natural wonders of springtime but seldom in any real way with the Resurrection of Christ. The rich, virile world of the Bible is replaced with a bland, fatuous world of untouchable purity and impossible piety--a world in which no healthy child would want to live. One result of this mis-education is the large number of adults who, having "graduated" from church school, think the Bible is boring. Equally tragic is the child who drops out of church school after third grade, carrying with him a set of twisted biblical images, and then with no further study whatever grows up to be an elder in the church!

Part of the problem is the ignorance of teachers and planners in the local parish, and no crash program of "leadership training" will correct adult biblical ignorance. Each planning and teaching team needs to become a study group in its own right, in which adults

can wrestle with biblical texts on an adult level *first*, with all the best scholarly tools available to them. When teachers are no longer threatened by myth or offended by the humanness of Scripture, they may feel less need to distort the Bible in order to make it suitable for children. When teachers can embrace historical-critical scholarship as enlightening rather than menacing, they will be able to share scholarly insights with children. A teacher who is prepared to let the Bible speak to *him* on its own terms is best equipped to let the Bible speak to *children* on its own terms.

Many children are far better able to handle myth than some adults would suppose. Partly because of the impact of television, even first-graders are able in many cases to distinguish between factuality and truth, and to identify the rules of different "language-games." By the middle elementary years, most children have learned that the presence or absence of objective factuality in a story may have nothing to do with the meaning and truth of the story. As Randolph Crump Miller says, "If we let them explore possible meanings in 'just a story,' they can begin to seek their own meaning and do some elementary demythologizing."⁵⁷ There is considerable evidence that the emerging mentality which is resulting from mass media will enable children to handle the nonrational elements in the Bible much more comfortably and appropriately than their parents were able to do at the same age. A perceptive teacher will recognize both when myth is

⁵⁷Randolph Crump Miller, *The Language Gap and God* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1970), p. 75.

a problem for children and when it is not, and thus the teacher will avoid the tendency to manufacture conceptual difficulties where there are none.

The Bible is not the only source of content for church education in the elementary years, although it is the central source. The Christian heritage includes church history up to the present, and children need to have a sense that the celebrating community of which they are a part knows itself as continuous with the people of God in all times and places. Some of the great words of the Christian vocabulary become more accessible to the conceptual abilities of children during the elementary grades. The character of the church's relation to the world, particularly as this relation is expressed in mission, provides further significant content. The seasons and festivals of the Church Year may be understood and interpreted by children more consciously than before. A child's participation in worship becomes more meaningful as he is helped to understand the various elements and movements of liturgy.

The Bible, however, will be the point of departure and return for the content of curriculum during these years. And the educational place of the Bible in the curriculum is precisely the same as its place in the liturgy: in the midst of the celebrating community.

Proclamation--Sermon

The Service for the Lord's Day restores the position of the *Sermon* immediately following the readings from Scripture. For some reason, many of the predecessors of this liturgy placed several other

elements--hymns, psalms, prayers, creeds--between Scripture and sermon.⁵⁸

One possible reason for this practice was the feeling that the sermon should be the climax of the service--the Lord's Supper being an infrequent celebration--and this order provided a place for the intercessory prayers and other elements which were thought to be important, while allowing for a speedy conclusion after the sermon.

In a service where the movement is from address to response, however, the sermon must not be an isolated or final word. Moreover, the Reformed dictum that the sermon shall be based upon specific Scripture is undermined when other elements intervene between the two. The Service for the Lord's Day, in returning to the practice of the Reformers in this respect, emphasizes the close relationship between Scripture, as the Word of God written, and sermon, as the expounding and contemporizing of that Word.

Preaching is an event in which the Word of God addresses the gathered community. It is not an educational island in the midst of a devotional sea, but a movement integral to the dialogue which is worship. The purpose of preaching is that God should speak: disciplined work--both in the study and in the pulpit--is required if the preacher is not to get in the way. The discipline of the preacher includes the central recognition that although the event of preaching requires the very best that he can bring, the Word of God can neither be brought about by the preacher's skill nor finally thwarted by his

⁵⁸Maxwell, *op. cit.*, p. 112; Melton, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-23.

incompetence. As Barth says, "The word of God is at once the necessary and the impossible task of the minister."⁵⁹

*. . . As ministers we ought to speak of God. We are human, however, and so cannot speak of God. We ought therefore to recognize both our obligation and our inability and by that very recognition give God the glory.*⁶⁰

Even if the preacher prepares literary masterpieces for sermons and delivers them with polished oratory--or even, on the other hand, if the minister's words are halting and muddled--the Word of God does not finally depend on the preacher's ability. One who preaches is not thereby absolved of the responsibility of careful and scholarly preparation, but the grace of God is such that God's address *can* be heard through human words.

The recognition that preaching is a theological event calls for discipline, as well, on the part of those who hear. The celebrating congregation does not listen to the sermon in the same way one would listen to a political campaign speech, deciding whether or not to vote for the candidate. Nor does the congregation listen in the same way one would listen to a lecture by a professor, assimilating information and accepting or rejecting his ideas. Listening in the midst of worship means listening for the Word of *God*, suspending judgment as to the character or ability of the human being who preaches. As Calvin puts it, " . . . When a puny man risen from the dust speaks

⁵⁹ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), pp. 212-13.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 186; italics in original.

in God's name, at this point we best evidence our piety and obedience toward God if we show ourselves teachable toward his minister, although he excels us in nothing."⁶¹

The act of listening, moreover, enables the sermon to express the dialogical character of worship. Howe writes:

. . . How sad it is that so few congregations are aware that their listening can play an enabling and strengthening part in the communication that is called the 'sermon.' The loneliness of many preachers is an indication that the sermon is monological and that the preacher is not met by a congregation which knows itself as a partner in the act of communication. The hearer, by demonstrating that he hears and understands the speaker, meets him in the risk of communication. Such a hearer ministers to the loneliness of the communicator and joins him again to the human race.⁶²

Preaching and listening can thus be mutual ministry, rising above lonely monologue and opening both speaking and listening celebrants to the address of God.

Some congregations, recognizing that preaching-and-listening may not be the most adequate form of proclamation, have explored alternative forms. Modes of communication such as drama, music, and film have been used. Another possibility has been a format of shared proclamation, in which all the people in conversation have wrestled with the Word of God. Whatever the form of proclamation, it must be rooted in Scripture and pervaded with the expectancy that God is speaking.

⁶¹ Calvin, *op. cit.*, IV:iii.1, p. 1054.

⁶² Reuel L. Howe, *The Miracle of Dialogue* (New York: Seabury Press, 1962), pp. 74-75.

The liturgy expresses the biblical rootage of proclamation by permitting no intervening elements of worship between Scripture and sermon. Yet the significance of proclamation is not simply in its biblical grounding, but in its interface with life. The God who is speaking in Scripture is speaking and acting in contemporary relationships and events--in the life of the congregation, and in the life of the world. Proclamation witnesses to the ever-acting, ever-addressing God, in such a way that God's activity and address are perceived as directed unmistakably to the gathered community.

Following the sermon, the liturgy provides for an *Ascription of Praise*, for which two alternatives are given, both biblical. This Ascription emphasizes that any expression of honor for the Scripture and sermon belongs, not to the preacher, but to God, whose Word has been active in the proclamation.

Now the liturgy provides an opportunity for the minister to extend an "*Invitation* . . . to any who wish to answer God's word by declaring their faith, or by renewing their obedience to Christ." This invitation is a transition to the final major movement in worship, which follows immediately and is to be understood as a response to the proclamation of God's Word.

As the curriculum model moves on to focus upon early adolescence, its basic theological understandings are provided by the movement of proclamation in the liturgy. The emphasis here is on the learner's exploration of the intersection of heritage, church, and world. The context for such exploration remains the redemptive

fellowship of the celebrating church, and the basis of the exploration is the Bible; thus the learning modes of consciousness and communication have not been left behind. Rather, the adolescent learner brings the attitudes, images, and tools gained from his earlier experience as he engages in dialogue with the church and the world in the light of the heritage.

Yet everything is not smoothly continuous. The physiological and emotional revolution that comes with adolescence impels the young person to question his earlier experience, both as he had interpreted it and as it had been interpreted to him by adults. Childhood images and adult answers are questioned. Struggles which seemed to have been resolved earlier now re-emerge and must be re-fought. The crisis is one of identity--the adolescent seeks to integrate childhood images and identifications with his present self-perception, and to locate and accept social roles which are consistent with that integration. Moreover, the young person needs a confidence that his self-perception is matched by the way others perceive him.⁶³

As the adolescent struggles to become "psychologically weaned"⁶⁴ from his parents, the influence of age-mates becomes especially potent. The young person seeks the approval of his peers to the extent that often "the youth becomes a slave to the conventions of

⁶³Erikson, *Identity*, pp. 128-32.

⁶⁴Sherrill, *The Struggle of the Soul*, p. 48.

his age-group."⁶⁵ Yet the task of individuation continues, and the young person is acutely aware of his separateness. His struggle is not toward the immersion of individual selfhood within a peer group, but toward the affirmation and enhancement of selfhood through group acceptance.

Adolescents are pointedly conscious of sexuality and sexual roles. The larger society's ambivalence toward adolescent sexuality is especially problematic, since so few socially-approved opportunities are available to adolescents for the definition and exploration of sexual selfhood. The differences in the rate of sexual maturation between boys and girls, especially in earlier adolescence, complicates matters further. Conflict between societal and peer-group pressures is often greatest in the sexual realm, leading to a painful confusion as to what one's sexual role ought to be. Regarding society's sexual standards, neither defiance nor acquiescence is a wholly comfortable alternative for the young person.

Wayne R. Rood suggests that the final goal of adolescent struggle is the attainment of mutuality:

. . . Now, mutuality is not possible without individuality; it is the dialogical relationship in which individuality is caught up and fulfilled--not surrendered--in dynamic and productive relationships to other individuals. It is the supreme task of adolescence to discover it; it is a lifelong task to enter into it. . . .⁶⁶

In a community whose support and acceptance of him is dependable, the

⁶⁵Havighurst, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁶⁶Rood, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

teenager may be enabled to find a resolution of the tension between individual identity and social relatedness, discovering the fulfillment of selfhood in mutuality.

The learning mode characteristic of the curriculum model for early adolescence is "exploration."⁶⁷ While children may have been content with the authoritative answers provided by adults, adolescents want and need the freedom to search, to question, and to test. Jerome Bruner suggests,

The major condition for activating exploration of alternatives in a task is the presence of some optimal level of uncertainty. Curiosity . . . is a response to uncertainty and ambiguity. A cut-and-dried routine task provokes little exploration; one that is too uncertain may arouse confusion and anxiety, with the effect of reducing exploration.⁶⁸

If learning is to be facilitated, the style of teaching will involve participative wrestling with ideas and questions, insights and doubts. The teacher must not dismiss questionings with a barrage of dogmatic pronouncements, but neither must he withhold factual information or convictional belief when these are appropriate. Exploration requires an openness to alternatives and a freedom from pat answers, but unless the church makes facts and strongly-held beliefs accessible to learners there will be nothing to explore.

The focus of the curriculum during adolescence, like the focus of the proclamation in liturgy, is on the three-way intersection of the Christian heritage, the church, and the world. The Bible remains

⁶⁷Slusser, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁶⁸Bruner, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

central. Because the young adolescent is likely to be re-thinking previously-acquired images and answers, it cannot be assumed that his earlier approach to the Bible will be acceptable to him now. He is prepared to raise more critical questions, but his increased intellectual capability may also enable him to penetrate more deeply than before into the structure and meaning of biblical texts. An opportunity must be provided for the adolescent learner to take another look at biblical passages, concepts, and events which may have been examined in earlier years, using his growing verbal and conceptual skills and applying scholarly tools in a more conscious, more refined way than he did as a child.

Biblical concepts which may have posed overwhelming intellectual problems to children--and which, therefore, were best communicated to children through relationships--may now be dealt with more directly and explicitly, provided the relational communication continues. The adolescent learner's experience of the Bible may appropriately include the full range of its contents, although he needs the help of knowledgeable teachers and critical tools. With some help, the adolescent can identify the different kinds of literature, comprehend nonrational elements, and find formal, historical, and ideational relationships in the Bible. Teaching of the Bible need no longer depend primarily on narrative, although adolescents need the opportunity to reinterpret biblical events, and passages which are in story form must not be left behind. The Old Testament prophetic books and the New Testament epistles are especially pertinent to the young adolescent's thinking

about himself and his world, and study of this material may yield significant learning. Apocalyptic literature, with its wild imagery and contemporary relevance, is particularly exciting and compelling to young adolescents. In the midst of a community which claims the Bible as the central document in its living heritage, and in the company of informed, compassionate adults who are committed to exploration and inquiry, the young adolescent may embrace the message of the Bible as it illumines and interprets his own existence.

A major focus of the curriculum for the early adolescent years will be on the church--its history, its affirmations, and its activity in relation to the address of God. The tendency among youth will be to regard the church as a conservative institution whose function is to preserve and transmit values and ideas inherited from earlier generations. Insofar as the church is a tradition-bearing community, an authentic conservatism is necessary. Yet the Christian tradition itself witnesses to the God who is active in the present; thus the church's function is not the preservation of nostalgic memories but a continuing response to the ever-acting God in the light of what he has done in the past.⁶⁹

The curriculum must provide an honest, accurate reading of the church's history and present life, with no attempt to whitewash the church's humanness. The goal of such honesty is not that learners

⁶⁹Elinor G. Galusha, "The 'Now' Generation and the Church," in *Youth Ministry Notebook III* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), p. 16.

should depreciate the church as being of no value, but neither must the church be idealized as if it could claim some merit apart from grace. The glory of the church is not in some special quality of righteousness or benevolence that it exhibits in comparison with other institutions, but in God's acting and speaking to and through the church. Church education seeks to enable the learner to come to terms with the past and present life of the church so that he may grasp this all-important theological dimension.

The young person, however, will be quick to sense the hypocrisy in the claim that it is of no consequence what church members do, so long as they believe aright. Curriculum for church education includes everything the church does. If the study of church history and belief is negated by the present action or inaction of the church, the teenagers will be most sensitive to the discrepancy. When a vital tradition is affirmed by the words but denied by the actions of the community which bears it, the adolescent learner will not only see the hypocrisy, but he is also likely to conclude that the tradition is irrelevant. If the church hopes to teach the vitality and importance of its traditions and beliefs as well as their contents, then there must be a fundamental congruence of word and life, of profession and action.

The church, however, is not an object to be identified, analyzed, and described. It is a people, an organism, a community--and if the nature of the church is to be perceived accurately, the only adequate perspective is belongingness. Furthermore, few adolescents

will be content for very long with the study of an institution if they feel isolated from that institution. The young person must experience the church in such a way that his membership in the worshipping community is integral to his conception of himself. Thus his study of the church's history and life must not be a detached examination of a "them," but a participative inquiry into a heritage which he claims as his own and into a community whose life he shares.

The community is a celebrating community, whose basis is the self-giving of God. When church education takes place in such a way that the young adolescent is enabled to embrace his belongingness within this community, his struggle for identity will not thereby be made easy or painless, but his wrestling with issues and with himself can take place within an affirmative environment. Sharing in the celebrative, God-given life of the church, he may find the fulfillment of identity not only in mutuality, but in the realization that he is addressed, affirmed, and accepted by God.

Response

The final movement of the liturgy is understood as the church's response to the proclaimed Word of God. This section, however, like the rest of the liturgy, moves continually from address to response. The center of this movement in the service is the Lord's Supper, which represents the climax of the liturgy. This sacrament was the distinguishing and indispensable act of Christian worship in the New Testament church.⁷⁰ The rubrics in *The Worshipbook* encourage

⁷⁰Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London: SCM Press,

celebration of the Lord's Supper as often as weekly, but there is a recognition that such frequent celebration will not often be the case. Even when the sacrament is omitted, however, the service includes all the elements of the Eucharistic liturgy with the exception of those directly involved in the sacrament itself, and the elements appear in the same order in which they would come in the Eucharistic service. This order is nearly identical to that of liturgies in use in the earliest church.⁷¹

Having heard the Word read and explained, the people rise to confess their faith in the words of a *Creed*. The liturgy provides three traditional creeds, but other alternatives may be used. The Creed was originally associated with Baptism;⁷² the liturgy affirms this significant tradition by providing for the baptismal rite immediately following the Creed. Even in the absence of this sacrament, the Creed stands on its own as a response to the proclamation. This response may be continued by the singing of a *hymn*.

Announcements concerning the life of the local parish have often been a source of embarrassment both to ministers and to congregations. Some have sought to remove them entirely or, failing that, to "spiritualize" them in some way. The embarrassment may be avoided,

1953), p. 29.

⁷¹Maxwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 17.

⁷²Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy* (London: Black, 1945), p. 485.

however, when the liturgical purpose of the announcements is understood. Their position in the service is helpful for that understanding. The *Concerns of the Church*, as they are titled, are to be understood as a prelude to prayer, expressing needs and events for which the congregation might properly ask God's blessing or help.

Having heard the immediate needs of the congregation and mindful of the needs of the world, the people take them to God in *Prayers of Intercession*. The prayers are introduced with an ancient *versicle* of affirmation. The prayers themselves are titled *The Prayers of the People*, emphasizing that they do not constitute a "pastoral prayer" (there is no such prayer in the mainstream of the liturgical heritage) but represent the corporate intercessions of the whole church. The liturgy suggests the use of "bidding" prayers, in which a need is announced, the people join in silent prayer, and the presiding celebrant sums up each intercession in a short collect. This practice reflects ancient usage,⁷³ although other forms for the intercessions need not be ruled out.

In *The Peace*, the liturgy affirms the very early tradition of the "kiss of peace" which was exchanged by worshipers to demonstrate mutuality and unity in Christ.⁷⁴ The congregation at this moment is on the threshold of the Lord's Supper.

The *Offering* follows. This is no materialistic interruption; as in the ancient church, it has a doubly profound significance.⁷⁵

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁷⁵Maxwell, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

On the one hand, it is a sharing of substance for the needs of the church and the world. As such, the offering is a response to, and a concrete expression of, the Prayers of Intercession. On the other hand, the offering is also a preparation for the Lord's Supper: the bread and wine, too, are offered as gifts. So the offering *belongs* at this point in the liturgy, looking back to the intercessions and forward to the Supper. Moreover, at the offering the community acknowledges that with respect to both the money offerings and the sacramental elements, God is the giver, not the church. Thus the offering closes with an *Ascription of Praise* and the singing of a *hymn* or *doxology*.

The minister now, in the name of Christ, extends an *Invitation to the Lord's Table* to all "who trust him." This simple invitation is in contrast to Calvin's liturgy, which calls for the minister to excommunicate obvious sinners and to exhort others to examine their consciences for signs of repentance and trust, before finally inviting repentant sinners to partake.⁷⁶ The Service for the Lord's Day, however, simply encourages Christians to come and celebrate, attaching no prior conditions.

The *Eucharistic Prayer* follows the invitation. One of the oldest forms of prayer in Christian worship, the Eucharistic Prayer was nevertheless subject to a great deal of manipulation and distortion during the Reformation, mainly because of medieval abuses of the original form and content of the prayer. In the *Worshipbook*, however,

⁷⁶Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-7.

the return of a truly catholic Eucharistic Prayer, with both structure and content dating from the primitive church,⁷⁷ is most welcome. Following the meaning of εὐχαριστία, the prayer is simply titled, "*The Thanksgiving*."

The celebration continues with the minister breaking the bread and pouring the wine while saying the *Words of Institution* in their familiar Pauline form.⁷⁸ The minister may also read the Johannine descriptions of Jesus as "the bread of life" and "the vine."⁷⁹ The elements are then distributed, and the communion concludes with an *Apostolic Benediction*, to which the people respond, "Amen."

After the Supper, an *Alleluia* or a short litany taken from Psalm 103 is said, introducing a very brief *Post-Communion Thanksgiving* prayer. A closing *hymn* is sung, reminiscent of the hymn sung by Jesus and his disciples following the Last Supper.⁸⁰

The people remain standing while the minister pronounces the *Charge*. The use of the charge gives expression to the idea that the dialogic character of worship does not end with the conclusion of the morning's liturgy; rather, in response to all that has happened in worship, the people now "go out into the world," confirming their worship in service. The liturgy concludes with an *Apostolic Benediction*.

⁷⁷Maxwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-25.

⁷⁸I Corinthians 11:23-26.

⁷⁹John 6:48; 15:1.

⁸⁰Mark 14:26.

The culmination of the educational curriculum of the church comes in the movement of response to God which is symbolized and enacted in the Eucharistic liturgy and as worshipers go into the world. This response is central to adult education in the church, and the appropriate modes of learning for adult response are reflection and action.

Too long the church has deceived itself with the assumption that education is exclusively for children. This assumption is based partly on the notion that education is a preparation for life rather than a process of living; thus adults, who consider themselves to have finished preparing and to have moved on to living, are not likely to feel much responsibility for further learning. The church must free itself from the crippling idea that adult education may be regarded as an optional extra. If the primary emphasis is to be placed at any one age level in the curriculum model, it must be placed *here*, with the adults. If the church remains content with mediocre or non-existent adult education, the results will be disastrous for the church's entire educational enterprise--for the adults are the parents, the teachers, the planners, the policy-makers. Quality education at the adult level will not only enrich the church's educational ministry at every other level, but it will equip adults to make enlightened, life-fulfilling responses to God.

Many educators today are strongly suggesting the inclusion of older senior highs within the scope of adult education. There is a growing recognition that high school students do not constitute a

uniform "peer group" and that in most cases there is no significant intellectual gap between older adolescents and adults. While the needs and capacities of children and younger adolescents may have required separate groupings, the restrictive classification of all senior highs within the category of "youth" is arbitrary, unnecessary, and destructive of the corporateness of the church. Although not all adult groupings will necessarily include older adolescents, and although some groups may still be composed exclusively of high school students, eleventh and twelfth graders should be encouraged to participate with adults in study.⁸¹

Adult education, then, for the purposes of the curriculum model, will include learners ranging from late adolescence to old age. It should be obvious that these learners do not constitute an "age group." The needs and tasks of individuals who are here classed as adults will range from the continuation of the struggle for identity in adolescence, through the problems and quests related to marriage, family, and economic responsibilities, to the need for self-acceptance and simplification toward the end of life.⁸² Yet despite the wide differences, adults no longer live in an age-graded world--especially in young adulthood and middle age, other factors than age take precedence in determining the status and groupings of individuals.

⁸¹Robert H. Kempes, *Lay Education in the Parish* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1968), pp. 27-35.

⁸²Erikson, "Youth and the Life Cycle," p. 308; Sherrill, *The Struggle of the Soul*, p. 9.

Encouraging study in heterogeneous groups will enrich the learning of persons in greatly differing stages of life.⁸³

The learning mode of this final phase of the curriculum may be described as "reflection/action."⁸⁴ Robert H. Kempes elaborates:

As a Christian he must both reflect and act in faith.
As a mature person he is capable of seeking out information, examining data, evaluating meanings, responding to God--for himself. In a real sense, as an adult or an older senior high 'becoming adult,' he is responsible for his own learning.⁸⁵

Of course, the mode of reflection and action is present in all four phases of the curriculum model, and the modes of conscious, communication, and exploration are also operant here. In adulthood, however, the emphasis is properly upon active, creative reflection and reflective, responsible action.

This kind of learning represents the fruition of the goal of Christian education. As Kempes says, "Such learning is not the abstract musing of the monk in his cloister but the active reflection of the man of faith who must make decisions about his life and the world where he lives."⁸⁶ The content of his learning comes from the changing issues of his life as well as the gospel and the Christian heritage. Vital, critical reflection on these issues will enable him

⁸³David J. Ernsberger, *A Philosophy of Adult Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959), p. 99.

⁸⁴Slusser, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁸⁵Kempes, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 9.

to act responsibly in relation to them. His actions, in turn, will demand more reflection, more information, and more study. Reflection and action are thus not detached modes of learning but represent a dynamic interchange of thinking and doing.

Adult education must be situational, existential, and flexible. The real issues of adult life in the world, seen from the perspective of the gospel, must determine the content of the study. In most cases, this means that learning opportunities cannot be constructed at the denominational level, but must be developed, perhaps using denominational resources, within the local parish where the laymen actually live.

The study of the Bible with adults must be consistent with the use of the Bible with children and youth. Such study must avail itself of historical-critical tools, but the primary thrust of Bible study must be an expectant approach to the Scriptures as a relevant Word from God in the midst of contemporary struggles, decisions, and actions.

Adult education in the church must break out of rigid, permanent structures and provide a variety of settings for learning. While ongoing classes may not be ruled out, individual study, short-term classes, seminars, retreats, and study-action involvements represent other important possibilities. Other structures of adults within the church, such as teaching teams and committees, are potential settings for significant learning. The possibility of ecumenical and interfaith groupings is particularly timely and valuable. Adult education may also take place in many locations outside local congregations.

When the curriculum for church education with adults--including subject matter, resources, leadership, groupings, and locations--is flexible and situational, the adult may make up his own mind as to whether or not to engage in available learning opportunities. "Planners for lay education," Kempes maintains, "should therefore offer a wide range of options for study to match the range of situations and questions faced by the laity."⁸⁷

The layman's decision to engage in lay study opportunities available to him rests upon his desire to learn something about the subject offered. It continues only on the basis of that interest. All laity can not be expected to respond to *all* learning occasions. Indeed, *not* all laity will want to study.⁸⁸

The provision of elective options recognizes that adults carry the major responsibility for their own learning. While children and youth also carried this responsibility, the adult is even more free to undertake and continue study as he chooses.

The adult responds to God *for himself*--the response cannot be made for him by someone else. Education may provide him with tools and insights, but it cannot usurp his freedom to respond. "As the believer who professes faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, he himself must struggle . . . to hear faithfully the word of God in the present situation."⁸⁹

The adult must respond for himself, but not *by* himself. He belongs to a community, a people--the worshiping church. As he struggles

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

reflects, and acts, he belongs. This is not merely companionship or mutual support: the vitality of this people does not come finally from their participation together in strife or hard decision, but from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Even in the midst of struggle, the community's life-style is not one of endless battle or aimless searching, but one of continual celebration.

Therefore, while the culminating phase of the curriculum may be described in terms of reflection and action, the essence of the church's educational ministry is neither reflection nor action, but celebration--a joyful, becoming-enlightened response to the gracious address of God, taking shape within the worshiping church and encompassing all of life.

EPILOGUE

THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR

If Christian education is to be a vitally enabling ministry, equipping the church for corporate and individual response to the address of God, more is required than a little tinkering here and there. It will not suffice to assume that all the significant curriculum decisions are made at the denominational level and that the task of local planners and teachers is to make only minor adjustments in the administration of a denominationally-prepackaged program. If church education is to be liturgically oriented--not simply in the way curriculum is structured, but in the pervasive spirit of education flowing from the celebrations of the worshiping church--the celebrants in every parish must accept both freedom and responsibility for education.

Christian education belongs to the whole church. The planning and carrying out of curriculum is not the exclusive province of a few teachers and decision-makers set apart for the task. Consciously or not, the whole church teaches. Possibly that teaching will negate what takes place in the classroom. But when a congregation, in response to the graciousness of God, becomes a genuinely worshiping community, that worship will inform and empower the entire educational enterprise.

The corporateness of the church, of course, does not mean

that everyone has the same role. Just as in the early church, where each "order" of worshipers had a distinctive and indispensable λειτουργία to perform, the present-day life of the church includes many more or less specialized roles. In most congregations of the major denominations, a particularly visible role will be played by a professional minister, or, as he is often called, a pastor.

Recent years have witnessed a lively discussion on the subject of this person's role. How he himself conceives of his role--how he assigns priorities to his different responsibilities, from what perspective he views his relation to his congregation--will have a highly significant impact on the educational ministry of the church.

Often a pastor's most conspicuous task involves leadership in worship. He is the presiding worshiper in a community of worshipers. In view of the centrality of worship, his leadership in the liturgy is crucial. By the way he approaches this part of his role, he can demonstrate to the community that worship is a dull, not-very-important routine, or he can lead them into an ever-deepening appreciation of the joy and excitement of worship as well as its profound continuity with life.

The pastor frequently is a preacher. The preaching task is considered by the church to be so important that many denominations seem to orient most of their requirements for ordination around the preaching ministry. Seminaries for the training of pastors have placed great stress on the acquisition of tools and abilities which will serve the preaching ministry. In many churches, when a pastor

has left, it is said that the pulpit is vacant--of all the things the now-departed minister once did, the most important thing, it seems, is that there is now no one there to preach.

As a preacher, the pastor may have a considerable impact on the church's educational ministry. His approach to the Bible in the pulpit will influence the approach to the Bible which is taken in the classroom. If his primary concern is to take his hearers back to the first-century world, playing down the Bible's intersection with the concerns of present-day life, the church school is likely to reflect a pervasive past-orientation. If, however, the preacher is concerned to mediate the address of God within a present divine-human dialogue, in its educational ministry the church is likely to approach the Bible in the expectancy that the encounter is continuing.

The pastor is an educator, whether he assumes that function consciously or not. In some circles he is called a "teaching elder." He is a theological thinker, who is concerned to enable others to think theologically. In the words of John R. Fry,

. . . No matter what comes out of his thinking, the thinking pastor simply thinks, not as an exercise of faith or a proof of faith, but as a venture in faith. In thinking with other people whom he considers thinkers he places his thoughts before them. And they become inevitably faced at least with the possibility of thinking, and perhaps with a charismatic event.¹

The pastor as an educator is not a "religious expert" but a committed learner, sharer, and enabler. His leadership is not entirely non-

¹ John R. Fry, *A Hard Look at Adult Christian Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 112.

directive, for the Word to which he witnesses makes a claim to ultimate authority. Yet he must not fall into the trap of *being* an authority--he *points* to the authority of the gospel. The Word of God confronts him at the same time it confronts those whom he teaches.

The pastor's educational function is partly an administrative function. This does not mean the dissipation of his energy and time in managerial trivia, but a pastoral relatedness to the church's educational ministry at every level. As the theologizing basic to educational strategy is done, he is there. As alternatives are weighed, decisions made, and policies established, he is there. As planners wrestle with problems and encounter opportunities, he is there. He is there as a listener, a participant, a theologian.

The pastor as an educator also has a ministry of specific teaching. Of course, he may teach in many situations outside of the classroom, but this central place of teaching has for too long been inaccessible to him. One of the happy results of a scheduling which places worship and church school at different times is that it frees the pastor to enter the classroom--at any age level for which the situation calls--and to teach. The pastor, moreover, has a responsibility to equip others for *their* teaching ministry, and to stand alongside them as they plan for, carry out, and evaluate their teaching.²

Is there a concept of the professional minister's role which unifies his many tasks and relates them to a single center? Yes: in

²Locke E. Bowman, *Straight Talk About Teaching in Today's Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), pp. 27-29.

the worshipping church, the minister's role is that of *leading celebrant*. He is a celebrant in a community of celebrants, and thus his role is not essentially different from that of his fellow worshipers, which is to respond to the address of God in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. His special λειτουργία, however, is to lead in such a way as to enable celebration. As a preacher, his task is to mediate the address of God and to speak to the meaning of the celebration. As a pastor, his peculiar genius does not consist in unusual psychotherapeutic skill or extraordinary expertise in group dynamics, but in his witness to the loving presence of God which gives the occasion for celebration. As a teacher, he is not finally an information-provider nor a program administrator, but a celebrant-enabler, helping people to embrace and use tools, insights, and understandings as they participate in the church's jubilant response to God within the continuing divine-human dialogue.

Thus the pastor is not *primarily* a preacher or an administrator or an educator, as if tasks such as these could adequately define his role. The authority and worthiness of his ministry come not from his successful performance of pastoral duties, but from the love of God in Jesus Christ. The basis for his ministry is the gospel, not self-justifying utility. His role is defined and validated as he responds to God, and part of that response involves enabling the response of others.

The pastor is *primarily* a worshiper. He seeks to be faithful in fulfilling his role as a minister, not because his life depends on

it, but precisely because his life is already given. His functioning as a minister is an outpouring of his response to grace--like those whom he leads, he needs no other justification other than that which comes from God in Jesus Christ. The pastor is a leader-celebrant. When he leads in worship and when he preaches, he celebrates. His teaching style is not austere, but joyful, and he seeks to lead learners to a new understanding of themselves in the light of the Good News, so that they may join him in the festivities. Because of the grace of God, the pastor is able to become a leader-celebrant in a community of celebration--the people of God--the worshiping church.

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